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The
Development
OF THE
Free Public High School
IN ILLINOIS TO 1860

By

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor Philosophy, in the Faculty of Philosophy,
Columbia University

1919

[Continued from October, 1918, Journal.]

Published by
ILLINOIS STATE JOURNAL PRESS
Springfield
1919

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

The author is under obligations to Dr. Paul Monroe for suggesting the subject investigated and the interpretation of facts as well as a critical reading of the manuscript; to Dr. W. H. Kilpatrick for helpful suggestions; to Dr. M. R. Trabue for a careful reading of the entire manuscript; to Dr. I. L. Kandel for helpful criticism; and to his wife for assistance in the preparation of the material.

The author is especially indebted to the county clerks of the older Illinois counties for permitting the use of old records; to the New York Public Library for the use of documentary material; to the Mercantile Library in St. Louis for the use of the J. M. Peck collection of newspapers; to Mrs. Jessie Palmer Weber and her assistants of the Illinois State Historical Library for kindness and courtesy shown in making available all the resources of the State Historical Library; and to the Illinois Historical Society for the publication of the dissertation.

P. E. B.

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CHAPTER IX.

The Movement of 1835.

The efforts for the inauguration of a common school system in the State did not die out with the virtual repeal of the school law of 1825. Political speakers, the State over, in their campaign for election, never failed to mention their ideas upon the education of the people. Col. Ewing, Speaker of the lower house of the legislature, and Abraham Lincoln were examples of campaigners who addressed their constituents on the value of education as the means of perpetuating free institutions.

The former said: "This is a subject, however, of more vital importance to society than any other. Its utility can not be properly estimated, without going too elaborately into its discussion. But there is a spirit abroad in many portions of this Union, whose purpose is devoted to the general education of the youth of the country, and the establishment of a system of schools, which will insure this grand purpose through all future time. The honest man, and the friend of his country, are looking to a system of schools and colleges for the general diffusion of knowledge as the only remedy for many existing evils in the body politic. I know no measure of its importance. It affords the surest guaranty against the arts of the ambitious, and the madness of party. Either intelligence must be generally diffused, or all we hold dear must be exposed to shipwreck for the mistakes of misguided judgment, or the deleterious influence of maddening and factious declamation of reckless demagogues, who live in popular commotion, and whose object is personal aggrandizement."¹

The latter said: "Fellow Citizens: Having become a candidate for the honorable office of one of your Representatives in the next General Assembly of this State, in accordance with an established custom and the principles of true

¹ Ill. Mag., v. 1, p. 383.

republicanism, it becomes my duty to make known to you—the people whom I propose to represent—my sentiments with regard to local affairs. * * * “Upon the subject of education, not presuming to dictate any plan or system respecting it, I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in. That every man may receive at least a moderate education, and thereby be enabled to read the histories of his own and other countries, by which he may duly appreciate the value of our free institutions, appears to be an object of vital importance, even on this account alone, to say nothing of the advantages and satisfaction to be derived from all being able to read the scriptures and other works, both of a religious and moral nature, for themselves. For my part I desire to see the time when education, and by its means, morality, sobriety, enterprise and industry, shall become much more general than at present, and should be gratified to have it in my power to contribute something, to the advancement of any measure which might have a tendency to accelerate the happy period.”²

Indeed, the necessity for the education of the children of the State was pressing. Immigrants were coming by the thousands; the eyes of the East were turned toward the West. Should the State grow up in lawless barbarism, due to ignorance, or should it become enlightened through the schools? All were agreed that a common school education was needed, but how to get a system for that purpose was unsettled. Judge Hall summed up the situation thus: “Common schools have increased a little in number, though not much perhaps in character. The defect exists altogether in the want of some general system. Education is decidedly popular, and all classes were willing to contribute to the introduction and support of schools. But how to obtain the desired object, is a question upon which there is as yet no settled opinion.”³

Hall concluded by saying that a local, individual school system was practically valueless. A state system should replace it. “A common school may enlighten to some extent a little neighborhood; but in order to disseminate intelligence throughout the whole mass of people, to elevate national

² Sang, Jr., March 15, 1832. A Lincoln.

³ Ill. Month. Mag., Dec. 1831, p. 102.

character, and to develop the mental resources of the whole country, there must be a union of action among the friends of education. Our politicians must become deeply imbued with a sense of the importance of the subject; and our professional, literary, and scientific men must come out from the retirement of their closets, and the enthrallments of their private avocations and labor for the public. The subject needs to be stripped of many theories that disfigure it, or give it a shadowy existence in the eyes of practical men; and to have its realities presented in their naked truth, and vigor, and beauty. The clouds of prejudice, which envelope it, ought to be dispelled, prejudices which relate to forms, to systems, to men, and to sects, and not as we sincerely believe, to subject matter. Every rational man desires knowledge, and wishes to see his children elevated in the scale of human beings. The objections are to means, the agents, and the manner of instruction.”⁴

The education of the children of Illinois was, moreover, a national affair. Mr. Gatewood, who championed the bill of 1835, in his address to the senate, said that the scepter that ruled the country would pass from the East to the valley of the Mississippi. Therefore, the education of the children was primary.

“The time is not far distant, and many, who are now active upon the stage, may yet live to see the day, when a majority of the people comprising these United States will reside in the Valley of the Mississippi. The scepter must soon pass over the Alleghanies, never again to return. The North, the East, and the South must soon, in a political point of view, be tributary to the West. The Land of the Puritans, the Empire State, the Old Dominion, and all, with their ancient institutions, their laurels, their heroes and their statesmen, big as they are with the praises of other days, must in a short time do homage to the great Valley of the Mississippi. The liberties of all America must be committed to the people of this valley for safe-keeping and preservation. The preservation of these liberties must depend upon the virtue and intelligence of the people of the West; must depend upon the very children, one-third of whom, are now destitute of the

⁴ Ill. Month. Mag., v. 1, p. 273.

means of instruction and growing up in ignorance. * * * The subject of education in the West then must be—it is a subject of deep and anxious solicitude.”⁵

The time was ripe for the statesmen of the day to make plans for the creation by law of a common school system, acceptable to the people. Judge Hall, the foremost literary writer of the State, was invited to address the people in Vandalia on the subject of education. This opportunity was seized to organize, in 1833, “The Illinois Institute of Education,” the purpose of which, as stated in the constitution of the society, “shall be the advancement of education in Illinois, especially in the common schools.”

After re-affirming the belief in the value of education as the savior of republican institutions, the association decided on three lines of action:

“1. Information can be obtained from every county in the State of the numbers and condition of primary schools, the time for which they are taught in a year, the average number of scholars that attend, the branches taught, the books received, and the mode of instruction pursued, the cost for each school, or even for each scholar, the probable number of children who ought to receive aid from public funds, and many other particulars relative to the present condition of the primary schools of this State.”

“2. Correspondence with public institutions and individuals in other states would furnish legislative documents relative to school statistics, plans of operation, application of public funds, qualifications of teachers, and the branches taught in different parts of the country, the various results of public and private munificence, and many other facts.”

“3. Through the channels of the press, and by public addresses, information may be thrown before the public.”⁶

The literature of the time carried this notice and these questions relative to the first plan of the association in which a survey of the primary educational status of the State was to be made:

“Friends of education, teachers and preachers of the gospel throughout the State are requested to correspond with

⁵ Sen. Rep. on Educ., Doc. No. 8, p. 8.

⁶ State Supt. Rep., 1885-6, p. 110.

John Russell, Esq., Postmaster, Bluffdale, Greene County, and to furnish such information as may be in their power on the topics involved in the following questions. The information of ladies as well as gentlemen is requested. And gentlemen out of the State are solicited to furnish the Institute with such facts and documents as may be needed, to be addressed to J. M. Peck, Postmaster, Rock Spring, St. Clair County.

1. What kind of a schoolhouse have you? 2. How many months in a year is school taught? 3. What is the cost of your school per annum, including pay of teacher, books, fuel, and repairs of schoolhouse? 4. What is the cost per scholar? 5. How many different scholars attend? 6. What is the average number of scholars? 7. How many children need aid from public funds. 8. How many schools in the county? 9. What branches are taught in your schools? 10. What books are used in spelling? In reading? In arithmetic? In geography? In grammar? 11. Are the elements of natural history taught? 12. Does your teacher lecture the scholars on the branches of science? 13. Does he ask questions on every reading lesson? 14. How many adults in your settlement who cannot read? 15. Have you a public library, and if so, how large, and under what regulations? 16. Could not a small library of useful books be had for the use of your school, and loaned to the scholars as rewards for proficiency in study, and good behavior? 17. Would you like to have a good teacher permanently settled with you, and would the school support him? 18. How would a circuit teacher do who should conduct four or five schools, visiting them once a week as teachers of singing do, and lecturing and explaining the branches taught? 19. What measures, in your opinion, or those of the people around you should the State adopt in relation to school funds? 20. Can you get up meetings of the people on court day, or any other convenient time, on the subject of education? 21. Will any gentleman make public addresses, or deliver lectures to the people on the subject of education and schools? 22. What proportions of the families take newspapers, or any other periodical?"

The information contained in these questions became the subject matter for the second meeting of the Illinois Institute,

⁷ State Supt. Rep., 1885-6, p. 111.

convened in December, 1834, at Vandalia, at the same time and place as the General Assembly. The deliberations of the educational convention were formulated in an address to the people of Illinois, and in a memorial to the legislature.

"A well devised system of primary schools will secure to their families increased prosperity and happiness to their country, wealth, glory and freedom."⁸ The means of providing common free education were stated in three ways: 1. Massachusetts had a policy of taxation exclusively; 2. Connecticut had the interest from a vested fund; 3. New York had the combination of the first and second plan—a tax and the interest on a vested fund. These three plans were concretely described and the position of Illinois in comparison was found most favorable, the New York plan being recommended.

But the whole heart of the system to be established, said the address, rested on the teacher who must be trained in special schools. "One of the great defects in the common schools of New England and New York is the incompetency of their teachers. * * * A child under competent instruction will acquire as much learning in three years, as is commonly attained in six under existing teaching, and hence, it is the interest of the people to employ skillful instructors. Would you trust the shoeing of your horse to any but a smith? You would not. Then we pray you by your parental affections, to pause, before you commit the education of your infant and immortal children, into the hands of men, ignorant of the laws of physics, and totally unused in the operation of the human intellect. If the blacksmith should learn his trade, surely the school teacher should study his profession."⁹

The Institute recommended to the legislature, in accordance with those ideas, the following principles to be established by law: 1. The citizens of a community shall elect their trustees and teacher and a majority of the citizens of a district may petition the county commissioner's court to lay off a school district. 2. "The teacher shall be required to keep a schedule, exhibiting the names and number of scholars, and the number of days that they respectively attend school,

⁸ State Supt. Rep., 1885-6, p. 117.

⁹ State Supt. Rep., 1885-6, p. 119.

and that all the funds distributed by the laws of the State for payment of teachers' wages, be apportioned according to the whole number of days which all the children shall have attended school, as shall appear from a copy of said schedule made out and sworn to by the teacher, and approved by the trustees of the school."¹⁰

3. The interest of the college and seminary fund should be loaned to the common school fund, but preserving the integrity of the former for future use. The interests of the State shall be better served by sectional seminaries rather than by one central institution.

4. The distribution of the interest from the school fund shall be made by the county school commissioner of each county on the basis of population, according to the last census.

5. The distributive share of each county shall be used for the payment of teachers' salaries.

6. "The State shall contribute an annual sum to the support of at least one respectable academy in each county, when the people thereof shall have first put the same into actual operation."¹¹

7. "Before any part of the money in the hands of the school commissioner be distributed by him for the support of the teacher, though citizens wishing to derive the benefits from it shall first erect and furnish a substantial and comfortable schoolhouse, agree to supply the same with necessary fuel, and engage to pay at least one-half of the wages of the teacher, and shall have a school taught at least three months."¹¹

The result of the recommendations of the State Teacher's Association was the proposal of a system of education, made in the Senate, Feb. 5, 1835, for a uniform system of common schools and county seminaries throughout the State.

The bill of 1835 had some very interesting and unique features, among which, were those that related to the creation of county seminaries. Those institutions were to be organized as public joint stock companies which have been described in Chapter III. After three months of operation, the

¹⁰ State Supt. Rep. 1885-6, p. 121.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 121.

State was required to pay annually to each seminary the sum of two hundred dollars. In turn, the State required those who expected to teach to sign a contract with the trustees of the seminary to teach in the county twice as long as the term required for qualification. Moreover, the commissioner of the seminary fund was authorized to pay to the trustees of these academies, the tuition of all persons who were qualifying themselves to teach.

Like the law of 1825, this bill made common schools free to all white children. As the law of 1825 was repealed, so the unusual provision for taxation in the bill of 1835 was defeated. The State was unready to assume the burden of educating its children and training its teachers free.

New York was still paying tuition for the education of its common school children. Pennsylvania passed a free school law in 1834-5, which caused a great deal of opposition in the legislature and in the State. Ohio and Indiana were struggling along with no common school system provided. The entire country still had some vestiges of the colonial system of apprenticeship education.

It is true, that nearly twenty-five years passed before the establishment of a normal school in Illinois. However, in 1835, scarcely a teacher training institution existed in the whole country. One of the new educational doctrines of the day was the professional training of teachers. Men like Stowe, who had gone to Europe to study the Prussian school system, advocated teacher training. If the older states were unready to establish normal schools, even as private ventures, Illinois should not be censured for failing to adopt that part of the bill providing for the establishment of county seminaries. Those institutions would, in all probability, have been doomed to failure.

The academies already organized, both public and private, did the best they could to educate teachers for the common schools. It is unlikely, however, that any academic institution provided more than a narrow scholastic education for prospective teachers, although the charters of some institutions stated that the qualification of teachers was one of their objects. The published programs of studies showed no professional subjects in the academic curricula. A thorough

preparation in reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic, with an attempted mastery of the classic languages, was considered sufficient preparation for those who were to teach in the primary schools.

In fact, nearly anyone with a little training in the elementary subjects was thought capable of teaching. Here and there was an occasional objection by some fairly capable judge to the work of teachers in the common schools. Thus a writer in the *Warsaw Signal* believed that some teachers were careless, indolent, ignorant and without the least desire to find out what was expected of them. "Teachers are frail mortals, as well as the rest of us; and some of them, I may say with truth, a little more frail than their employers. I conceive it to be one of the worst evils of our system, that it has a tendency to make teachers careless, and indolent; and it has been operating so long, that many of them do not seem to care whether they do their duty or not; and any number of them in my opinion, do not even go to the trouble of inquiring what their duty is. I only make these remarks that they may do good, if so be where there is good to be done, that whosoever the shoe pinches may wear it."¹²

An extremely severe, and probably just indictment of the common school teacher of the State was that given by one of its educational leaders. The first common school journal of Illinois, published in 1837, had but one year's existence because the teachers were unable to understand its methods and because of the little interest in primary education. "We apprehend there is not sufficient intelligence among the mass of teachers in the State to appreciate the merits of such a work, nor interest enough taken by parents in the success of common schools, or in the education of their children, to induce them to extend, at the present time, an adequate support to the enterprise."¹³

From our point of view, we could expect little of teachers because little was expected of them by the people. A circuit teacher was surely less efficient than a circuit preacher. Occasionally, a circuit teacher had as many as three schools to teach, as well as supply the books. However, that method

¹² *Warsaw Signal*, Feb. 2, 1842.

¹³ *Ill. Hist. Col.*, v. 6, p. 63.

had its adherents who stated the advantages in no uncertain terms. "First. Two neighborhoods, unable to support a school separately, can, by uniting with each other, enjoy all the benefits of a common country school."

"Second. One teacher can, on this plan accommodate two settlements at the same time; and this is no small advantage when good teachers are so few and far between."

"Third. By reducing the cost of tuition nearly one-half, poor people who have large families can give them such an education as will fit them for occupying a respectable station in society."

"Fourth. Those whose children are large enough to be of service to them either on the farm or in the house, can, on this plan, have them at home nearly half the time, employed in useful occupations, and acquiring steady and industrious habits, without which the health of the body, as well as the health of the mind, is destroyed."¹⁴

Another picture of the teacher and the school, as well as the community, emphasized the lack of schools, the meager education provided, the insecurity of tenure and pay, and consequently, unqualified teachers. "During the early history of Illinois, schools were almost unknown in some neighborhoods, and in the most favored districts, they were kept up solely by subscription, and only in the winter season, each subscriber agreeing to pay for one or more scholars, or stipulating to pay for his children pro rata for the number of days they should be in attendance. The teacher usually drew up articles of agreement, which stipulated that the school should commence when a specified number of scholars should be subscribed, at the rate of \$2, \$2.50, or \$3 per scholar for the quarter. In these written articles, he bound himself to teach spelling, reading, writing, and arithmetic, as far as the double rule of three. Occasionally, a teacher would venture to include English grammar. But in the earlier years of my youth, I knew of no teacher who attempted to give instruction in grammar or geography. And such branches of history, natural philosophy, or astronomy, were not thought of. Many parents were unwilling that their children should study arithmetic, contending that it was quite unnecessary for farmers,

¹⁴ State Supt. Rep., 1885-6, p. 114.

and what was the use of grammar to a person who could talk so as to be understood by everybody?"¹⁵

With scarce and inefficient schools, with little or no legal requirements for certification, and with no adequate provision for the training of teachers, went low salaries. Sometimes the teacher was to "board round," or live with the patrons, in turn. Tuition for each pupil was charged, varying in amount from district to district, but it was used chiefly to pay the teacher. Once in a while, a widow was exempted from her share of the payment of the teacher's wages beyond her part of the common school fund. The law of 1825 made it legal for a teacher to receive produce instead of money.¹⁶

Between 1844 and 1846, the highest wage for men ranged from \$17 to \$30 per month; the lowest, from \$6 to \$12, the average being about \$15; the highest wage for women ranged from \$9 to \$17.56 per month, the lowest, from \$3 to \$6, the average being about \$10.¹⁷ No statement was made as to whether these wages were exclusive or inclusive of board and lodging. In some instances, it is known, when this calculation was made by the ex-officio State Superintendent, that teachers paid their own board and lodging, in others, they did not.

Illinois, at any rate, ranked among the highest states in the payment of teachers' salaries if the statistics of Horace Mann in the *Prairie Farmer* in 1848 were reliable: "Salaries of teachers per month exclusive of board and room:

Maine	\$15.40,	males,	\$ 4.80,	females
New Hampshire	13.50,	"	5.65,	"
Vermont	12.00,	"	4.75,	"
New York	14.96,	"	6.69,	"
Pennsylvania	17.02,	"	10.09,	"
Ohio	15.42,	"	8.73,	"
Indiana	12.00,	"	6.00,	"
Massachusetts	24.51,	"	8.07,	" "18

In spite of the continuous reaffirmation, by political candidates for office, of the value of common school education, the legislature passed few laws very far in advance of the

¹⁵ Patterson, *Early Soc. in So. Ill.*, in *Fer. Hist. Ser.*, No. 14, p. 121.

¹⁶ See *Contract of Allen Parlier* in Chap. VIII.

¹⁷ *Senate and House Rep.*, 1846, p. 185.

¹⁸ *Prairie Farmer*, 1848, v. 8, p. 222.

general level of intelligence of the people in the State. However, attention was focused on desirable laws though they were to be enacted in the future, by the indefatigable labor of the State Educational Association. The men of that body, at once and clearly, saw the necessity for trained teachers to conduct the schools. But the people were not to blame for failing to see the value of an entirely new educational doctrine, new, even to the older states, when scarcely any system of common schools was in operation. The low salaries, the inefficient teachers, and the inadequate schools, were partly the product of a frontier civilization, but also the result of the low educational conditions in the states from which they emigrated.

CHAPTER X.

Some Agencies that Aided in the Development and the Establishment of the Common School.

The common school system of Illinois, when the permanent free school law was passed, in 1855, was the product of more than a quarter of a century of development. In considering farther the internal evolution of the system itself, let us examine the means by which the people of the State were taught to accept the principle that the State should educate its children. In general, democracy was just beginning to grow, and becoming conscious of its power. Humanitarian ideals, doing something for the other man's children, were for the first time, a national characteristic. Though the period from 1830 to 1865 was marked by many abuses in educational practice, the mass of the people were learning for the first time the advantages of a universal system of free common schools. Illinois had many agencies which contributed to the growth of that ideal.

Usually, in a frontier community, moral and educational values are first determined, by the championship of individual leaders. More settled life develops group leadership, not separate from, but existing along with prominent leaders, and institutions emerge with their own ends in view. Through the influence of educational leaders, the writings of newspapers and magazines, the work of institutions such as the Sunday schools and public libraries, and educational conventions, the development of the free school was hastened. Our next consideration, therefore, is a study of the part taken by these agencies.

Educational Leaders.

Governors of the State of Illinois, in the period we are considering, from first to last, took the lead in calling the attention of the general assembly to the necessity for, and the needs of the common schools. Governor Bond, the first in

office after the State was admitted into the Union, in 1818, recommended that township trustees lease the school lands, using the rent for educational purposes. Besides, a certain per centum of the sales of all public lands should be reserved for the use of schools, both of which incomes would be sufficiently large to educate the children of the state to the remotest period of time.¹

We have described the activity of Governor Coles relative to the question of slavery and the free school law of 1825. With the many other recommendations to the legislature, Governor Coles spoke of the proper preservation of the public lands in the State as a means for the education of future generations. "But, from the present super-abundance of lands, these will not be productive of much revenue for many years to come; they should, however, be strictly husbanded as a rich source from which to supply future generations with the means of education." (Now followed his suggestions which resulted in the free school law of 1825). "In the meantime, would it not be wise to make legal provision to assist in the support of local schools?"²

Whether or not Coles or Duncan wrote the law of 1825, both men were champions of the common schools. The latter, in following Coles as chief executive, continued to advise the legislature of the value of common schools, of the necessity for the adoption of some scheme of government support for education, and of the wisdom in preserving the now small fund for future use. "As every country is prosperous and respected in proportion to the virtue and intelligence of its inhabitants, the subject of education will doubtless again form an important part of your deliberations. It becomes us to use every exertion in our power to instruct those who are immediately dependent upon us, and least to those who come after us the rich revenues to be derived from land, canals, and other improvements; to form a permanent fund to carry out any plan you may adopt for the purposes of education. A government like ours carried on by the will of the people, should be careful to use all the means in its power to enlighten the minds of those who are destined to exercise so important a trust. This and every consideration connected

¹ Niles Weekly Register, v. 15, p. 192.

² Sen. Jr., 1824-5, p. 19.

with the virtue, elevation and happiness of man, and the character and prosperity of our State, and of our common country calls upon you to establish some permanent system of common schools by which an education may be placed within the power, nay, if possible secured to every child in the State.”²

The governors above mentioned exemplified the part taken by the chief executives in support of education. We shall speak in another connection of those who assisted the passage of the free school law of 1855. But no less influential in moulding the common schools of the national period were the preachers, writers, lawyers and the professional classes generally.

Were one to select the man whose efforts were the greatest for the moral and educational uplift of the people, it would be Rev. J. M. Peck. The organization of the Rock Spring Seminary was but one of his many-sided activities. Sunday schools, through which the common children and many of the older people learned to read and write were first developed by this missionary preacher. Peck was found at every important gathering, legislative, agricultural, religious and educational, urging the creation of a system of schools for the common people. Through him, a public meeting, assembled in the state house at Vandalia to hear an address by Judge Hall on education, became the nucleus of the first state teachers' association. He was acquainted with the best in the New England schools, and knew how to impart that knowledge to others, either in his horseback rides over the State with backwoodsmen, or in legislative halls with governors and political leaders. In him, the common man's children, as well as the children of the elite, had a lifelong friend. The passage of the first permanent free school law in the State was a fitting tribute to him, who had spent more than a quarter of a century for the cause of education in the State of Illinois.

The New England and eastern settlers in Illinois were distinguished by their championship of the cause of free common school education. Jonathan B. Turner, a teacher in Illinois College, spent the prime of his life, 1834-55, for the cause of the education of the common people, although he is

² Sen. Jr., 1834-5.

better known for his service in the advocacy of and the establishment of the University of Illinois. Conventions were organized, addresses were made, and letters and pamphlets were written by Turner, advocating the establishment of the common school by co-operation, and the unity of the educational forces of the State. A letter to his fiancée showed that he went about the State working for the common school:

"Soon after writing my last, I determined to spend my vacation in looking into the state of common schools in Illinois. I have been absent about seven weeks, have passed through some dozen or fifteen counties and delivered public addresses in all the county seats and principal villages."

"The result is that in all the counties I have visited, and many others to which I have written, they have resolved to call county meetings and elect delegates to the State Convention to be held at Vandalia next December to discuss the subject of common schools, and lay the subject before the people and Legislature. My success has been better than I expected, and I hope great good will result."⁴

Another statement represented some of the things that Turner said in his addresses to the people on the subject of common schools: "While others are still contesting the boundaries of human freedom and adjusting the restraints of human depravity, we would give unlimited scope to the one by exterminating the other from the face of the earth. With these ends in view, it devolves on us to augment the facilities, the resources and the completion of knowledge, until a royal road shall be paved from the threshold of every cabin in the land to the open doors and waiting honors of our most magnificent temples of science. If by council, concert, and co-operation, we concentrate our energies and husband our resources to the utmost, who can over-estimate the final result? But if we fling the experience of the past and the advantages of the present to the winds, and each for himself resolves in his own solitary career of experiment and effort,—beleaguering and jading the public mind, and exhausting the public resources with our own isolated and selfish schemes—what a fearful retribution awaits both of us and those who are to come after us."⁵

⁴ *Life of Jonathan Baldwin Turner*, p. 70.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

The whole group of Illinois College men and their associates—Edward Beecher, Julian M. Sturtevant, Truman M. Post, Theron Baldwin, William Kirby, Samuel Adams, Elisha Jenney, Asa Turner, John F. Brooks, Samuel D. Lockwood, J. M. Ellis, Albert Hale and William Brown—were devoted advocates of the common school. The welfare of the State and the happiness of the people depended not only on the advancement of education, but these men also saw that the cause of higher learning was destined to be founded on a common public school system.

Notices of the work done in the advancement of education by some of these men appeared in the newspapers of that day: "At the commencement in Jacksonville, Aug. 21, 1833, an address on Common Schools, by Rev. Theron Baldwin." "Thursday evening, Nov. 13, 1834, an address in Springfield by Prof. J. B. Turner, Subject: Common Schools." "Lecture on Education by Rev. Mr. Baldwin at Mt. Carmel, Wabash County, August, 1836." "A lecture by Prof. Sturtevant in Springfield, 1843, in behalf of a State Superintendent. Lecture repeated before the legislature the next night." "The annual commencement of Jacksonville College Sept. 21, 1836. N. B.—A convention of teachers will be held on the afternoon of the preceding day to concert measures for the cause of education in this state."⁶

Judge Hall, the foremost literary writer of the State up to the time of his removal to Cincinnati, in 1833, advocated public education in his addresses and writings. Theron Baldwin, with other Illinois College men, took up the cause of education in their editorship of the *Common School Advocate*. John S. Wright of Chicago, built a common school in 1835 in Chicago, at his own expense; edited the *Prairie Farmer*, a journal devoted to agriculture, mechanic arts, and common schools, and took an active part in the creation of educational laws. Charles E. Hovey, the first editor of the *Illinois Teacher*, the president of the State Teachers' Association, principal of the public schools of Peoria, and head of the Normal School established in 1857, performed a distinguished service in organizing and uniting the teachers of the State in the cause of free public schools.

⁶ State Supt. Report, 1885-6, p. 128.

Besides the editors just mentioned, the missionary circuit riders and state religious agents seldom failed to lend their influence for the enlightenment of the children of the State. Lemuel Foster, appointed in 1832 as a missionary to Illinois, built an academy in Jacksonville and one in Bloomington where common, as well as academic instruction was given; established Sunday schools in the surrounding country and interviewed his constituents for the purpose of gaining their support for public instruction. John F. Brooks, sent to St. Clair county, opened one of the first teachers' seminaries in Waverley, in 1837, directed the Springfield Academy in 1840, and acted as principal of the public schools in the same city. Other typical religious leaders were Romulus Barnes, Flavel Bascom, Aratus Kent, Peter Cartwright and Hubbel Loomis.

The work of the state superintendents and legislators in securing laws for the organization of free schools should not be overlooked. Mr. Gatewood was named in the last chapter and an extract of his address was given to show what he, as chairman of the Senate Educational Committee, thought were the reasons for developing common schools. S. W. Moulton, to whom the free school bill was entrusted, in the legislature in 1854, spent several years after the passage of the law in writing articles and giving addresses on the justification of taxation for the support of schools, and the manner in which the distribution of revenue for school purposes should take place. N. W. Edwards spent much time in gathering statistics to show the condition of the schools of the State. As superintendent, he visited every county and gave addresses urging the creation of free schools. Moreover, the legislature required that he prepare a bill for the reorganization of the entire school system. A state agent was appointed by the State Teachers' Association to travel over the State in the interest of free schools. His first report indicated the nature of his work:

He visited twenty-one schools and delivered sixteen evening addresses the first month. "At Hennepin, I found a new and beautiful edifice, erected at a cost of seven thousand dollars, for a private school, and labored, not without hope of success, to induce the people to obtain it and establish therein

a graded free school. At Kewanee, it was attempted to show that the true interests of Wethersfield and Kewanee, adjacent districts, would be promoted by purchasing the seminary building located midway between them, and organizing in it a Central High School. The stock-holders proposed to give the six thousand dollars already expended, if the two districts would assume the indebtedness—two thousand dollars. The proposition was well received, and has since been adopted. They will soon rejoice in the possession of a first class High School, free to all whose attainments entitle them to admission.”⁷

Men of national prominence in other states were also influential in the development of the school system of Illinois. The ideas of Jefferson were foremost in the law of 1825. DeWitt Clinton was a leader, in the state of New York, in creating a common school system. But his addresses appeared in the Illinois papers, of which the following is a typical extract: “The great bulwark of a republican government, is the cultivation of education; for the right of suffrage cannot be exercised in a salutary manner without intelligence. Ten years of a child’s life, from five to fifteen, may be spent in a common school, and ought this immense portion of time to be absorbed in learning what can be acquired in a short period? Perhaps one-fourth of our population is annually instructed in our common schools, and ought the minds and the morals of the rising, and perhaps the destinies of all future generations, to be entrusted to the guardianship of incompetence? The scale of instruction must be elevated; the standard of education ought to be raised. Small and suitable collections of books and maps attached to our common schools, and periodical examinations to test the proficiency of scholars, and the merits of the teachers, are worthy of attention. When it is understood that objects of this description enter into the formation of our characters, control our destinies through life, protect the freedom and advance the glory of our country; and that this is the appropriate soil of liberty and education, that it be our pride, as it is our duty to spare no exertions, and to shrink from no expense, in the promotion of a cause consecrated by religion, and enjoined by patriotism.”⁸

⁷ Ill. Teach., v. 5, p. 90.

⁸ Sang. Jr., Jan. 10, 1835.

Horace Mann's and Henry Barnard's reports dealing with the organization and establishment of a common school system, also were quoted in Illinois publications. Moreover, Mr. Barnard was on the program at two different common school conventions where he discussed the internal features of free schools.⁹

Any classification of some of the representative leaders is impossible because their interests were so many sided. An Illinois College founder like Baldwin was a missionary, who established Sunday schools, a preacher who advocated the cause of education before the legislature, and the principal of Monticello Seminary wherein some teachers were trained for the common schools. Moreover, he was an editor of one of the literary agencies for the promotion of education in the West.

Literary Agencies.

Only a little of the literary material of the period to 1850 has been preserved. In that which has survived, the subject of education continually appears. Many of the newspapers spread information about the schools of the State, inserted addresses from men like Governor Clinton, Horace Mann and Henry Barnard on education, summarized the reports of state superintendents of public instruction in such states as New York and Connecticut, and recommended the adoption of certain principles for the improvement of education in Illinois. As the creators of public opinion, and the means by which the knowledge of school practices was disseminated, many of the newspapers were preeminent.

The ideas attributed to Judge Hall, the first newspaper editor in the State, have come from the volumes of the Illinois Monthly Magazine, published at Vandalia, 1827 to 1830. That publication might well be called the first school journal of the State. Among other articles were those on the need for scientific instruction as opposed to an all-language curriculum; arguments for the creation of a state system of free common education; recommendations for the use of new and better text-books, and surveys of the educational means in existence. This magazine was too far in advance of the literary ability of the people on the frontier; hence it was necessary for the editor to remove to Cincinnati in the early thirties where the publication was continued.

⁹ State Supt. Rep., 1885-6, p. 152.

However, in 1837, appeared the *Common School Advocate*, a monthly journal, printed at Jacksonville. A group of editors, probably Illinois College teachers, carried on the publication for a year without pay. Even the short existence of the paper, only twelve months, advanced the common school cause. The contents of the *Advocate* are indicated by the first editorial suggesting topics for contribution.

"Objects of education—different grades of it, and the kind adapted to this age. Teaching made a profession—benefits of it. Best method of teaching geography, arithmetic, grammar, reading, writing, etc. Common schools—their importance, etc. Necessity of well qualified teachers. Teachers' seminaries. Government and discipline of a school. School books. Common school libraries and apparatus. Duties of parents, teachers and trustees. Location and structure of school houses. Systems of education in our own and other countries. Importance of universal education under free governments. Accounts of educational associations and conventions, or of particular schools. Facts respecting the state of education, particularly in Illinois. The system best adapted to our circumstances. Moral and religious education in schools. Connection between ignorance and crime—between intelligence and national prosperity."¹⁰

But the most influential school journal, until the appearance of the *Illinois Teacher*, in 1854, was the *Prairie Farmer*, issued as the *Union Agriculturist* from 1841 to 1843. The title page, among other things, said it was a journal dedicated to the cause of the common schools in Illinois. Without its record, the story of the struggle for free education in the period from 1841 to 1854, would be almost impossible of reproduction. Such articles as these were discussed in its pages: the need for a normal school; the necessity for trained teachers; the criminal negligence in not providing decent common school buildings; reports of the ex-officio state superintendent of common schools; proceedings of educational conventions, both state and county; arguments against select schools and private academies; the reasons for free schools; the subjects taught in the free schools; reports of the New England and New York common schools; advantages of a State superintendent; gradation as a means of improvement

¹⁰ State Supt. Report, 1885-6, p. 133.

in the educational system; desirable school legislation, and school statistics.

The cause of the farmer was the cause of the common school. The readers of the *Prairie Farmer*, besides learning about agriculture and mechanic arts, were being educated in the cause of free schools, so that the passage and adoption of the free school law of 1855 was possible. Moreover, this journal had the unique distinction and advantage of reaching the patrons of the schools rather than being a journal read by the teachers only.

Last, but by no means least, was the *Illinois Teacher*, founded in the interests of education, in 1854. Established about a year before the passage of the first permanent free school law, this journal became a means, primarily, of helping develop the free schools. Methods of teaching the subjects in the curriculum were discussed in each number from year to year. Educational news in the way of promotions, increases in salary, and the employment and marriage of teachers appeared. The proceedings of educational conventions; digests of school law; controversies over which section of the State was more enlightened—"Egypt," or the North; reasons for gradation with the explanation of its meaning; reports from the State agent travelling in the interests of the establishment of free schools; notices of the creation of high schools and suggested curricula for them were a few of the many subjects treated.

The teachers, especially, were made conscious of many of the problems raised by the beginning of free schools. Also, were the teachers benefited by the experiences of others through the medium of the first relatively permanent professional journal. The support of the *Illinois Teacher* by the profession itself signified, for the first time, a unity of action and a group consciousness of the teachers themselves. With that power back of the free schools, progress became possible.

Institutions Whose Objects Indirectly Aided Common School Education.

Prominent among the organizations for the aid of the common schools, was the Ladies' Association for the Education of Females, established at Jacksonville, Oct. 4, 1833, "the principal object of which shall be to encourage and assist

young ladies to qualify themselves for teaching, and aid in supporting teachers in those places where they cannot otherwise be sustained.”¹¹

“The plan was liberal and simple. The principle object was to educate teachers, but no pledges were exacted; no attempt to decide where or how the individual could be most useful. The great object was to instruct and elevate the human mind for its own sake, and in the belief that a mind rightly educated will not fail to enlighten others.”¹¹

The fifth annual report of this association advertised schools where prospective teachers could receive training. Such were in Fulton, Morgan, Greene, Madison, Macoupin, Bond, Pike, Putnam, Knox, McLean and LaSalle counties. Moreover, auxiliary associations had been formed in Chicago, Ottawa, Farmington, Peoria, Springfield, Alton, Upper Alton, Rushville, Carlinville, Galena, Griggsville, Quincy, Fairfield, Hadley, Warsaw, Carlyle, Augusta, Knoxville, Bloomington, Jacksonville, Carrollton, Manchester, Canton, Waverly, Winchester, Jerseyville, Beardstown, and Joliet.¹²

The power of the association is seen in that twelve hundred young women were assisted in receiving an education, many of whom became teachers in the common schools, with \$25,091.35 expended for that purpose. The Illinois Teacher described the work, purposes and aims of the organization thus: “With none of the pomp and e’clat which herald the movements of other institutions, it has gone steadily on in its benign mission” * * * educating young ladies, “who else must have been forever denied the blessings of liberal culture, have been sent forth to be angels of mercy and joy to many hearts and homes, in this and other lands. This is not the language of mere eulogy; we have watched the progress of this society from its foundation; we know the ladies who are and have been its officers and friends; we know its struggles and labors, and we know its fruits. We cannot better express our opinion of its history and character than in the touching and eloquent words of one of its founders:”

“Silent, catholic, economical and persevering; it has been so Christ-like in its labors that the world has never known and could not stop to read its history. Its anniversaries have

¹¹ 5th An. Rep. Lad. Assoc.

¹² 5th An. Rep. Lad. Assoc.

been simple exponents of an institution partaking so little of the spirit of the world. No noise, or parade, but a plain statement of its labor, expenditures, and successes. Its history is written in the heart of many a missionary, toiling in obscure indigence; it is written, too, in the heart of the orphan and the poor, who by timely aid have been able to break the fetters by which poverty held back their aspirations for knowledge; it will be read in the ages to come, in the light of heaven."¹³

This association mainly educated poor girls, many of whom found their way as teachers into the common schools. A better class of teachers was thus provided than would have been without the work of this association.

Workingmen's organizations, in the absence of common schools, provided education for the youth of their districts. Even the Mechanics' Union of Springfield advertised that its school was the free public school of the city. These associations helped focus the attention of the people on the need for, and the absence of, a free school system. Newspapers commented upon the worthy purposes of the workmen, and advertised, in the news sections of the paper, the rates of tuition, the curricula and the objects. One association stated its aims in these words:

"The Springfield Mechanics' Union is established for the creation of a common school, and a public library, and for the promotion of literature, science, and the mechanic arts;"¹⁴ Other purposes were stated but they are not related to the subject of education. Similarly, the Mechanics' Union of Chicago said that its object was to diffuse knowledge and information throughout the mechanic classes, to found lectures on natural, mechanical and chemical philosophy, and other scientific subjects; to create a library and a museum for the benefit of others, and to establish schools for the benefit of their children.

The movement for the education of the children of the working men was general in the period from 1830 to 1865. Common schools were established in the principal cities throughout the East and the middle West. Many of the Mechanics Institutes in the older cities today, owe their origin to

¹³ Ill. Teach., v. 4, p. 286.

¹⁴ Sess. Laws, 1839-40, p. 74.

this period in which labor organizations established schools in the absence of a free common school system. Through that experience, the public was gradually learning the value of, and how free schools should be established.

General education, by whatever means, had a decisive influence in making it possible for the creation of universal free education. The emancipation of the mind of men and women from ignorance gave them the taste for the education that ought to be provided for their children. Another means, therefore, by which older people were educated was the public library. These, indeed, assisted the establishment of a common school system by showing the merits of education.

Public libraries were formed as joint stock companies in several towns. The county commissioners' record of Edwards county, 1815 to 1832, had the names of twelve stockholders who subscribed 97 of the 300 shares for the creation of a public library; whereupon the contract was let to John Robinson for the erection of a library building to cost \$1,800.

This building was used for public meetings, a house of worship and a library. "A good market house, and a public library is at the end, in which a kind of Unitarian worship is held on Sunday, when a sermon and church service, purified, is read by any one who pleases. The books are donations from the Flower family, and their friends in England."¹⁵ "They have a library, and much attention appears to be paid to the cultivation of the mind as well as the soil."¹⁶

Edwardsville made a similarly early start in the foundation of a library by buying books from Boston. "It will, no doubt, be gratifying to the proprietors of this institution to know that the books lately ordered from Boston have arrived. Those subscribers, who are in arrears, it is hoped, will come forward and by paying up, entitle themselves and others to use one of the best collections of books in the country."¹⁷ The catalogue of books, which were considered the masterpieces of literature, appeared in the same issue of the *Spectator* as the above quotation.

The session laws have several of the articles of incorporation of public library associations in them. Other un-

¹⁵ Faux Jr., p. 253, Thwaites, v. 1.

¹⁶ Niles Reg., v. 19, p. 368.

¹⁷ Spec., Aug. 7, 1819.

incorporated organizations were also formed, both of which served as a means of public enlightenment. Usually, the membership fee was low enough for all to join, perhaps one dollar a year, and the people were requested to make use of the books.

"The trustees of the Warsaw Library Association take pleasure in informing the stockholders of the institution that they have procured the railroad office for their use, and that they are fitting up in connection with it a Reading Room, which will be open in a few days, well supplied with newspapers. The room will be open each day (Sunday excepted) after the hour of five o'clock, P. M., at which time stockholders wishing to receive or exchange books, will be waited upon by the librarian for that purpose. Ladies and gentlemen of the village, and strangers sojourning among us, are respectfully invited to use it."¹⁸

A second means of promoting the general intelligence were the academies. More direct connection between the semi-public seminaries and the common schools existed than at first might be suspected. The principals and teachers of many of the former institutions were leaders in the educational thought of the State. Those men and women held their positions because of their ability, and the trust placed in them by the public. Active in the councils of the state, and county associations, those men took every occasion to promote free education. Indeed, they appeared before the general assembly in the interests of the common schools, as well as in the interests of the academies. Finally, they were intelligent and generous enough to believe that the hope of higher learning lay in the creation of a free school system.

Moreover, both public and private academies provided much of the common school education of the time. In the charters of the former, a stipulation usually was made which required or provided that the academies conduct common schools. The following quotation is an example of the relationship between the academy and the common school: "Sec. 9. There shall also be attached to the said academy, a department in which shall be taught branches that are usually taught in the common schools of the district in which

¹⁸ Warsaw Signal, May 26, 1841.

said academy may be situated; and the said trustees of said academy, shall receive from the school commissioner of the county, the same amount of money in the same proportion, and apply the same to such tuition in the same manner as other common schools are paid and kept; Provided, that the teachers or instructors, of said department shall be selected by the trustees and under the control of the by-laws of said corporation.”¹⁹

But the share of the common school fund that the academies received for maintaining a common school was not sufficient to pay the expenses of a very long term. The result was that the academies charged their common school pupils tuition at a little lower rate than was received for the higher branches, or reduced the tuition of all subjects by the amount that they expected to receive from the school fund, or kept the rate of tuition as high as possible, even when they received their share of public money, because there was no authority that required a standard rate of tuition.

Nevertheless, the proposed school bill of 1835 was an attempt by which one academy in each county of the State should be so regulated and supported as to be a direct benefit to the common school. Tuition for the graduates of the academy who were to be teachers in the common school, was to be paid by the State. At any rate, the academy and the common school were brought into a closer relation by some of the students of the former becoming teachers in the latter. The two institutions were again brought together, for the purpose of advancing the interests of the common schools, in the series of educational conventions that were held between 1833 and 1855. Before discussing the conventions, however, a study of the work of the Sunday schools follows:

The Sunday school was very prominent in raising the level of general intelligence throughout the State. It had its origin in Europe, in the Wesleyan revival, beginning in 1738, and the humanitarian philosophy that just preceded the French Revolution. In England, the purpose was primarily concerned with the education of poor children, but independent of the church. On the other hand, in the United States, the first Sunday school, organized at Philadelphia in 1791,

¹⁹ Sess. Laws, 1841, p. 7.

was established for the purpose of giving secular and religious instruction. It was the accepted province of the church to give religious education, and the connection between the common school and the church had been so close that the Sunday school developed as a church institution. On the secular side, the Sunday school provided rudimentary education for the lower classes in the older states, while all classes in the frontier western communities received the benefits of that well organized body.

After 1831, the Massachusetts Sunday School Union became a parent of smaller organizations in Illinois, while the Illinois State Sunday School Union, composed of members of the principal religious denominations in the State, organized branches in nearly every county and smaller auxiliary branches, both, through the help of state agents, intelligent and devoted citizens, resident clergy and circuit missionaries.

Rev. Theron Baldwin gave this account as an example of his work in establishing Sunday schools:

"The Sabbath School,—to establish which was among my first efforts here, commenced about the first of February with a good degree of interest * * * It numbers a little more than one-hundred. The library books have been read, and these in connection with the exercises of the school have evidently done much already towards creating a thirst for knowledge on the part of the scholars. Of the one-hundred five who have entered the school, only thirty-seven could read. I have made particular efforts in the Sabbath School, from a firm conviction that the minister of Christ can spend a part of his energies, at least, in no other way to so great advantage." ²⁰

The following is an account of how Sunday schools were established: "It is often difficult to start a Sabbath school, there is so much ignorant prejudice and opposition. I have a way which does well, when many good efforts of another sort are lost. In my visiting about, I look out some house in the settlement where I intend to form a school,—and one can generally be obtained in one way or another—and then without giving a word of notice, for that would awaken and combine opposition, I fill my saddle-bags with books begging

²⁰ Home Miss., v. 2, p. 59.

what I can, buying what I cannot beg, (for it is against the rules of the S. S. Union to give books before a school is formed) get on my horse and ride around with them to each family in the settlement, talk over with them the whole matter of the Sabbath School, and its benefits, persuading the parents, showing my books and interesting the children, giving to each, on the condition of their attending school, such a book as would be needed in it, at the same time telling them where and when we would begin to meet. In this way, the careless and prejudiced, who would not stir a step to hear ever so many addresses on Sabbath Schools, become deeply interested.”²¹

Sunday schools were established as early, at least as 1821, for the settlers of Lebanon formed themselves into a society and built a house where a seminary, library, a debating club and a Sunday school were conducted. About a decade later the records show how extensively the system was established in every section. Peck estimated that 375 Sunday schools with 2000 teachers, 17,000 pupils and 2000 volumes in their libraries, were in existence in Illinois.²²

Usually, two sessions were held on Sunday, in the morning and in the afternoon, where reading, writing and some very simple arithmetic were taught. The Bible, religious hymns and religious tracts were the principal texts. The youth, and occasionally their elders, were taught by the best educated men and women of the district and the local or circuit preacher opened or closed each session with an address to all.

These institutions made communities in several districts realize their educational deprivation which surrounded them with the result that in some instances, the Sunday school was continued as a permanent week-day school. Thus the inhabitants of Rushville first founded schools on Sunday, and then, “formed themselves into a School Association, for the purpose of keeping in operation a permanent school, to be taught by a competent instructor; of good moral and temperate habits.”²³

²¹ Home Miss., vol. 2, p. 59.

²² Peck, Gaz., p. 89.

²³ Home Miss., v. 2, p. 194.

In considering the literary agencies in Illinois, Judge Hall characterized the value of the Sunday schools in this manner: "We view these efforts with unmingled pleasure. Apart from the important religious bearing of the Sunday School system, we consider it the most powerful engine, that this creative age has produced, for diffusion of knowledge. Its adaptation to the wants of a new country is peculiar. It brings instruction within the reach of thousands who have not the means of procuring it through ordinary channels; disseminates education free of expense; scatters books far and wide over the country; creates a taste for reading, and habits of inquiry among the young; and by its social character exercises a most happy effect, in promoting kind feelings, and cordial intercourse in society."²⁴

Educational Conventions.

The Vandalia conventions of 1833 and 1834 have been sufficiently discussed in the last chapter. However, those meetings were the first of a large number in the State and counties, to 1855. They created enthusiasm for the common schools; they brought the leaders and friends of education together, and made harmonious and concentrated effort possible.

The constitution of the Illinois State Education Society, organized at Springfield, Dec. 28, 1840, was an illustration of the purpose for which teachers' associations were founded: "The friends of education assembled in Springfield, believing that the perpetuity of our free institutions, and our political, social and moral well being, depend mainly on the general diffusion of knowledge among people; and that the wants of our rapidly increasing population strongly demands such an improvement in our common school system as will place the benefits of education within the reach of every citizen. * * * Its object shall be to promote, by all laudable means, the diffusion of knowledge in regard to education; and, especially, to endeavor to render the system of common schools throughout the State as perfect as possible."²⁵

²⁴ Ill. Mo. Mag., v. 2, p. 103.

²⁵ Sate Supt. Rep., 1885-6, p. 136.

From 1841 to the constitutional convention of 1847, much material was published on the creation of a State Superintendent of common schools. Petitions were circulated at the instance of educational associations, while editors of newspapers and journals urged their readers to sign. As a sample of the memorials sent to the legislature by teachers' organizations asking for the establishment of a superintendent of common schools, let us examine the one sent in 1841.

"Let a superintendent of common schools be appointed—a man of talents, and yet a laborious and self-denying man; one who would go into all the dark corners, as well as the bright spots of the State, and labor day in and day out for the improvement of our common schools. Such a man would be a great use, not only in awakening the public to the importance of education, but by collecting facts for the information of your honorable body and the people. He would associate with all classes of the community, from the cabin to the mansion—from the humble teacher of the humblest school to the most learned professor—and advise you of their feelings and views. He would note the practical operation of the system, and suggest for your consideration wherein it might be improved. He would (a matter of no mean moment to the success of the common school education) do much towards bringing about a steady and uniform administration of the law.

"Your memorialists would also suggest that, as a matter of economy, a man of established virtue—of much experience; one who is familiar with the habits and feelings of our people; a man whose mind is well disciplined—should be placed at the head of this department. The interests involved are so various, so momentous, that the best mind in the State should be set to watch over them. Should the right sort of a man be selected and paid out of the general school fund, he will save to the general and township funds, by looking after their interests (aside from all other benefits resulting from his labors), a sum at least equal to his salary.

"Your memorialists would also suggest, that if any regard is due to the experience and example of other states, who have found a superintendent necessary to the success of their efforts in behalf of common school education, you are

strongly urged thereby to appoint a superintendent of the State of Illinois.”²⁶

The legislature, however, passed no law creating the superintendent of common schools. But the Peoria convention of 1844 took up the question again with the result that the Secretary of State was made ex-officio state superintendent of common schools.

A whole reorganization of the school system was demanded from the legislature by the Peoria meeting. Discussions and reports were made on the subjects of a board of education; a board of county superintendents; district trustees; school districts; town superintendents; the school fund; gradation, and taxation.

On the last point, the memorialists argued at great length to overcome the hostility of the legislature and the people they represented, to taxation. Even if schools should be supported by taxation, the State was deeply in debt and times were hard because the effects of the panic of 1837 had not passed. But the objection to a tax for the education of other people's children was natural. The following paragraphs illustrated the attitude of the Peoria convention:

“We come now to consider finally, the one great requisite of the proposed plan—taxation. Each of the other parts is considered essential, yet they are but the machinery to work this result. We come out frankly and boldly, and acknowledge the whole system, every effort is intended only as a means of allurements to draw the people into the grasp of this most awful monster—a school tax.”

“But start not back in alarm. After all he may not be so terrible as some have perhaps imagined. Used with skill and judgment, and no other power can accomplish what he will; no other can work such changes in your common schools, and it is in vain that we attempt to dispense with his services. All experience throughout the Union is in favor of his employment. We do not, however, propose coercing any to employ him, who prefer to let him alone. All we ask is to give those permission to use him who are so inclined; and others when they witness his subordination, and power to

²⁶ State Supt. Rep., 1885-6, p. 136.

work for the cause of education, will doubtless desire themselves to try his services''

'Our position is that taxation for the support of schools is wise and just, that it is in fact the only method by which the deficiency for defraying the expenses of popular education beyond that supplied by the public funds can be equalized amongst those who should pay it.'

The schools of the State, by the law of 1845, were permitted to receive a tax for their support provided it was levied by a vote of two-thirds majority in any district. The amount of tax, however, that could be levied in any way was not to exceed fifteen cents on the one hundred dollars.

Four agencies by which the common school was aided in its development, and in its establishment as a free public institution have been discussed. (1) Prominent educational leaders were: most of the governors, who were nobly assisted by the untiring labors of Peck; the Illinois College men; such editors as Judge Hall, John S. Wright, Charles E. Hovey; the missionary circuit riders and resident ministers; state superintendents; legislators; state agents; and a few nationally prominent men of other states in the persons of Jefferson, Clinton, Mann and Barnard. (2) Many of the newspapers of the State, the Illinois Monthly Magazine, the Common School Advocate, the Prairie Farmer, and the Illinois Teacher were the literary means devoted to the interests of the common schools. (3) Institutions that increased the general intelligence of the people and created a desire for better educational opportunities were, the Ladies' Aid Association for the Education of Females; workingmen's organizations, public libraries, Sunday schools and academies. (4) Enthusiasm, harmony, and cooperation among the friends of the common school in the cause of general enlightenment, were developed by educational conventions. An ex-officio state superintendent of common schools was created in the person of the Secretary of State upon the recommendation of the Peoria Convention. But the legislature only conceded the right to levy taxes for the support of schools when a two-thirds majority of the people of any district so decided. The next chapter shall show how the common schools were made free, and shall indicate what the attitude was toward them.

CHAPTER XI.

The Free School Law of 1855.

The friends of education were not satisfied with halfway measures. If districts were allowed to decide whether a tax should be voted for the support of schools, there would be few free schools. As a result, agitation was continued by educational associations for the appointment of a state superintendent of common schools, separate from the Secretary of State, and a compulsory ad valorem property tax. Accordingly, the Chicago school convention in 1846, resolved, among other things, to make a survey of the State in order to determine the qualifications of teachers in the service of common schools, the condition of schoolhouses, what amount of money was raised in each district for the support of schools, what was the attitude of the people toward general property tax, and what sum was paid for tuition by subscription.¹

The Springfield Teachers' Association in the same year took a little different course. They resolved "that a committee of five be appointed to report to the convention a plan for the organization of a State Education Society."² That society was immediately organized, and began to create auxiliaries in the counties of the State for the purpose of aiding common schools.

The discussions by members of all the conventions, since the first in 1833, had finally awakened the public to the need of a more adequate school system. The people had seen the necessity for the revision of the state constitution and had assembled in a constitutional convention in Springfield in 1847. The fundamental law of the State ought to recognize the all-important subject of a system of education. Accordingly, the convention appointed a large representative committee

¹ *Prairie Farmer*, v. 6, p. 351.

² *Ibid.*, v. 7, p. 73.

to consider the subject. To them, petitions were pouring in, chiefly from the newer counties of the North and West, settled by Easterners. Represented in the list, were Livingston, Madison, Cass, DuPage, DeKalb, McLean, Knox, Fulton, Peoria, Mason, Brown, Winnebago, Carroll, Crawford, Rock Island, Marshall, Whiteside, Stephenson, Pike, McHenry, St. Clair, and Sangamon counties.

It was but natural, therefore, that a resolution was introduced in the constitutional convention for the creation of a state superintendent of common schools: "Believing that important measures are necessary to advance the cause of education, the basis of our republican form of government, and to elevate the moral standard of common schools, the only source from which most of our youth derive their education; therefore. Resolved, That an article be ingrafted into our state constitution creating the office of state superintendent of common schools, who shall be elected by the people and hold his office for the term of four years, and until his successor is elected and qualified, and receive the salary of \$—— whose duty it shall be to have the general superintendence of common schools in this state, and report the conditions of the same in a manner and as often as may be required by law."³

Next, a resolution was passed by the convention which provided for the support of schools by taxation and a superintendent to make the system effective: "Resolved, That the committee on education be instructed to consider and report as to the propriety of a constitutional provision for the security of the college, seminary, and common school funds from conversion or destruction by the legislature. Also, for the establishment of a system of common schools as well, by taxation combined with state funds, afford the means of education to every child in the state, and the appointment of a state superintendent, with an adequate salary, to give effect to such system."⁴

Whereupon, the educational committee of the constitutional convention introduced a bill, which passed the first reading, and which should become a part of the organic law of the State. By this, the legislature should create a free, uni-

³ Jr. Const. Conv. p. 31.

⁴ Ibid., p. 78.

versal system of common schools, at the head of which should be a state superintendent, appointed by the governor for a term of two years.

"Sec. 3. It shall be the duty of the General Assembly to provide for a system of common schools, which shall be as nearly uniform as may be throughout the State, and such common schools shall be equally free to all the children in the State, and no sectarian instruction shall be permitted in any of them."⁵

"Sec. 4. The superintendency of public instruction in this State shall be vested in an officer to be styled 'the superintendent of common schools,' and such county and local superintendents as may be established by law."⁶

"Sec. 5. At the first session of the General Assembly after the adoption of this constitution and biennially thereafter, it shall be the duty of the governor, by and with the advice and consent of the senate (a majority of all members elected thereto concurring therein), to appoint a superintendent of common schools, who shall hold his office for the term of two years and shall perform such duties and receive such salary as the General Assembly shall prescribe."⁶

After so much discussion in the constitutional convention of the establishment of a free school system with its proper officers, the constitution of 1847 is singularly silent on educational provisions.

Nevertheless, the common school leaders in the State kept right on trying "to erect upon a permanent basis a plain, practical system of Free Common Schools. The great fundamental principle of this action should be, that our schools be free to every child (native or adopted) in Illinois, free as the genial showers and sunshine of heaven."

The State Educational Society authorized the publication of a magazine, the *Illinois Teacher*, devoted to the cause of common schools and resolved, "That the property of the State should be taxed to educate the children of the State."⁸

The same attitude toward taxation was shown by some of the educational associations of the northern and western

⁵ Jr. Const. Conv., p. 352.

⁶ Jr. Const. Conv., p. 352.

⁷ State Supt. Rep., 1885-86, p. 166.

⁸ *Prairie Farmer*, v. 8, p. 81.

counties, a typical resolution from which is this: "Resolved, That Common Schools should be free to all, both black and white, and being thus free and accessible to the poor as well as the rich, neither rich nor poor should be allowed to deprive their children of the means of a Good Common School Education."⁹

Of course, the common, though true and sincere, arguments advanced, were that free institutions could only succeed by free schools. "That the whole people, without distinction of age, sex, or condition, shall have unrestrained access to the fountains of public instruction, in order that our free institutions may be transmitted to posterity in undecayed magnificence."¹⁰

Infrequently a moral persuasion for the necessity of educating the children said, "it is the duty of the State to educate every child in it. There could not be a more rational, patriotic or benevolent expenditure of wealth than in the holy cause of education, and thus the moral improvement of our population."¹¹

Governor French, who had been ex-officio state superintendent, asked the legislature to repeal all school laws and start anew with a simple system of education supported by tax on property, and made free to all children alike. "I desire to see a system by which every child, whatever its condition or parentage, may have an opportunity to obtain an education equal with the most affluent of our state—such as will fit them for any grade or condition of life."¹²

Governor Matteson, following Governor French in office, made a somewhat similar statement: "Intelligence gives to the country happiness at home and respect abroad * * *. Why not open its portals wide and make its benefits universal? * * * I now repeat that the laws in relation to schools be repealed, and that in the place of them a simple law be passed—by which a general system of schools shall be established, and maintained entirely by levies (so far as the school fund shall be insufficient) upon property open and free to every child within the borders of the state. This recommendation con-

⁹ *Prairie Farmer*, vol. 8, p. 335.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

¹¹ *Sangamo Jr.*, July 20, 1847.

¹² *Sen. and House Rep.*, 1853, p. 8.

templates a system of instruction of a character sufficiently elevated to fit every child for every rank and station in life.”¹³

The legislature though unready to inaugurate those ideas into laws immediately, did create a separate department of public instruction. With a capable man as state superintendent, it was thought that the cause of the common schools would be advanced most rapidly. A brighter day for education was at hand. Governor Matteson, in 1854, appointed Ninian W. Edwards, son of the first territorial governor of Illinois, and a man who had held the office of attorney general and been a member of the state legislature for sixteen years, the first state superintendent.^{13a} Mr. Edwards was charged with the duty of reporting “a bill to the next regular session of the General Assembly, for a system of free school education throughout the State, and the manner for the support of which system to be provided for by a uniform ad valorem tax upon property, to be assessed and collected as other state and county revenue is assessed and collected.”¹⁴

Mr. Edwards, complying with the request of the legislature, reported a thoroughly comprehensive bill with the reasons for its passage. The bill provided for the election and duties of the state superintendent; the election and duties of school commissioners; the election, duties and powers of township boards of education; judgments and executions against school boards; the examination, qualification and duties of teachers; school libraries; township and county school funds; common school funds, and additional taxes for the support of schools.

The legislature accepted the bill but made some modifications by keeping the district system, which had been excluded, and by imposing a state tax for education. The tax amounted to two mills on the dollar, and was added in the distribution to other funds which made up the common school fund “The common school fund of this state shall consist of such sums as will be produced by an annual levy and assessment of two mills upon each dollar’s valuation of all taxable pro-

¹³ *Prairie Farmer*, 1854, p. 102.

^{13a} The legislature enacted a law creating a separate office of Superintendent of common schools in 1854. It made it the immediate duty of the governor to fill the office until the November election of 1855.

¹⁴ *State Supt. Rep.*, 1885-86, p. 190.

perty in the state, and there is hereby levied and assessed annually, in addition to the revenue for state purposes, the said two mills upon each dollar's valuation of all the taxable property in the state, to be collected and paid as other revenue is collected and paid", etc.¹⁵

In the next place, the law of 1855 made it mandatory that the trustees of both townships and local districts should levy a tax to supplement the distributable fund of the State. At least one free school in every district should be established and kept in operation six months out of each year. In addition, "for the purpose of erecting schoolhouses, or purchasing schoolhouse sites, or for the repairing and improving the same, for procuring furniture, fuel and district libraries, the board of education of any district shall be authorized to have levied and collected a tax annually on all property in their district." ¹⁶

It seemed that there was some misunderstanding, intentional or otherwise, over the purposes for which a tax could be levied. Hence the law of 1859 restated that provision more specifically. "For the purpose of establishing and supporting free schools for six months, and defraying all expenses of the same, of every description; for the purpose of repairing and improving schoolhouses; of procuring furniture, fuel, libraries and apparatus, and for all other necessary incidental expenses, the directors of each district shall be authorized to levy a tax, annually, upon all the taxable property of the district. They may also appropriate to the purchase of libraries and apparatus, any surplus funds, after all necessary school expenses are paid." ¹⁷

Since there was a fund to be distributed to the common schools by the state, provision was made in the law to base two-thirds of the distribution on the number of white children in each county between five and twenty-one years of age, and one-third on the number of townships or parts of townships in each county. "On the first Monday in June, in each and every year, next after taking the census of the state, the auditor of public accounts shall, under the supervision of the commissioners of the school fund of the state, ascertain the

¹⁵ Sess. Laws, 1855, Sec. 67, p. 77.

¹⁶ Sess. Laws, 1855, Sec. 71, p. 78.

¹⁷ Ill. Teach., v. 5, p. 3 of Circular of State Supt.

number of white children in each county in the state, under twenty-one years of age, and shall thereupon make a dividend to each county of two-thirds the sum from the tax levied and collected; and the interest due on the school, seminary and college fund, in proportion to the number of white children in each county under the age aforesaid, and of the remaining one-third, in proportion to the number of townships and parts of townships in each county.”¹⁸

Finally, the money due the townships should be distributed “in proportion to the number of days certified on such schedules respectively to have been taught since the last regular return day fixed by the act or trustees for the return of schedules.”¹⁹

The greatest objections to the free school law, which taxed property for the support of education, were obviated by the method of distributing the state school fund. The more thickly populated sections benefited by the distribution on the number of children under twenty-one years of age. The sparser districts were helped by the distribution on the number of townships or fractions thereof per county. Moreover, the richer sections, which might also have the greatest number of minors, paid the biggest share of the tax. Cook county paid out \$65,150.31, and received \$29, 185.02, while Williamson county paid out \$1,737.04, and received \$4,917.25.^{19a} It is easily seen, therefore, that the state tax distribution method was a powerful argument that carried in poorer sections where other reasons failed. The principle of distributing state money, collected from the richer sections, to help poorer districts was first used after 1855.

The Attitude to the Free Schools.

Quite frequently the attitude to the common schools became one of defense for, or objection to the private academies and select schools. Occasionally, the semi-public academies were included in the condemnation. The struggle concerned itself, therefore, for the supremacy of one system of education over another. Should leaders in society, and they alone from the wealthy people, be educated by the acad-

¹⁸ Sess. Laws, 1855, Sec. 69, p. 78.

¹⁹ Ibid., Sec. 36, p. 61.

^{19a} Sangamon county paid out \$23,440.75, and received \$12,412.82. See Auditor's Report for 1855-6, p. 35-6.

emies, thus leaving the poor people to shift for themselves? Or, should the State adopt a system of free education especially favorable to the common man? It did adopt such a system in 1855, with the result that its friends began to sing its praises. The virtues usually found were superior in the common schools, inferior in the academies.

First and pre-eminent, were the arguments from democracy. The children of the rich and the poor, the high and the low, were all on the same level in the common schools. Rewards and punishments, success and failure came as a result of individual merit rather than distinction from wealth and parentage. In the light of our republican institutions, private schools were a failure. "They were the nurseries of aristocracy; not the aristocracy which despises the poor man because he is poor—which calls men of moderate means, small fisted farmers, greasy mechanics, and filthy operators, unfit to associate with well-bred gentlemen, and says free society is a failure, which threatens the overthrow of republicanism, and is hard upon our free schools:"²⁰

Private schools, pushed to their logical conclusions, would divide the American people into classes entirely contrary to our traditions. Not only would the rich and poor be separated, but "there must be schools to represent particular nationalities and particular forms of belief. And this would perpetuate national peculiarities, and embitter religious prejudices and beget a clannish spirit, and divide society more and more into parties estranged and hostile to each other, when every effort should be bound together by friendly intercourse in universal sympathy and concord. And I know of no minor agency to affect this than a well devised and well sustained system of common public schools."²¹

In the common schools "and the humbler walks of life, where talent is oftenest found, the gifted and good—educate and qualify themselves for the responsible positions in life."²²

Common schools, universally established, would enable parents, "to educate their children at home, where they can counsel with the teacher in the formation of the child's char-

²⁰ Ill. Teach., v. 4, p. 78.

²¹ Ibid., p. 87.

²² Ibid., p. 79.

acter, and where they can detect and check those tendencies to evil to which most children are prone."²³

Besides, private schools and academies were located where they were least needed. "The private school system will never plant schools where they are needed to meet the wants of the entire community. Hence some, nay, many would under it be excluded from all school privileges by location. Teachers will of course choose to establish schools only in dense and wealthy communities, where good compensation will be assured to them, and the poorer and more sparsely settled sections of the country will be left altogether unsupplied."²⁴

Even though academies were rightly located, "they are too expensive for general use. Teachers must live; and private schools must charge a rate of tuition per scholar which will support the teacher or teachers, and afford a superior income sufficient to pay rent for buildings and fixtures, and this will make education much more expensive to scholars than when the property is taxed to support the schools of the district. And especially does this private school system press heavily upon those in the community who are rich only in mouths to be filled, backs and feet to be covered, and bills to be paid. Multitudes of children must remain untaught if only this system be in operation among us."²⁵

Finally, the private school teacher sacrificed efficiency for popularity with pupils, which meant popularity with the parents. Some thought that popularity was incompatible with the proper handling of pupils, because the only concern of the teacher should be to know and do his duty. Wealth ought not make any difference in the children's school privileges. But common school pupils paid only thirty dollars, where academic pupils paid ninety dollars for instruction.

However, it was recognized that the academy had some advantages. (1) "The teachers in the private schools, as a class, are superior in natural endowments and scientific attainments to the teachers in the public schools. They must be so to sustain themselves. No private school with inferior teachers at its head ever had more than an ephemeral existence; while nine-tenths of the public schools, taking the coun-

²³ *Ill. Teach.*, p. 80.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

try through, are supplied with teachers of an inferior grade, unfit to be trusted with the molding of immortal minds.”²⁶

(2) The equipment and apparatus was far superior in the academies. (3) The academies had a more enriched curriculum while public school education was “confined to the intellect at the expense of manners, morals, and the organic structure. Better no education, than such education. It only tends to make rogues.”²⁷

It is evident therefore, that the State was divided into two groups, the one favoring public schools, the other academies. The south, generally, wanted to be left alone with its original class system of education. On the other hand, the north wanted to impose its common school system on all alike, the State over. The attitude of the two sections can be clearly obtained by studying the literature of each of the two groups. Many times the south was bitterly opposed to the common school, while the north eulogized it.

“We have got to hating everything with the prefix free, from free negroes up and down through the whole catalogues—free farms, free labor, free society, free will, free thinking, free children, and free schools—all belonging to the same brood of damnable isms; but the worst of all these abominations is the modern system of free schools. We abominate the system because the schools are free.”²⁸

The other attitude follows: “We dedicate it to freedom; to humanity; to advancing civilization of the ages; to an ever onward, ever upward, and ever glorious career of conjoined knowledge and industry, science and art, justice and humanity. In a word, we dedicate it to the human race, to Christ, and to God, to the truth they enjoin, the beneficence they inspire, and the glory they impart; and should any ever in the future attempt to divert or hinder it from these great ends, this glorious career, we this day pray that their hands and their tongues may become palsied and powerless; that its beams and rafters may cry out against them, and its very bricks and stones confront and repel them; and that, ever guarding its own vestal fire within, it may throw far abroad the radiance of its own light—resplendent and beneficent to

²⁶ Ill. Teach., v. 4, p. 77.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 79.

all on earth—accepted and blessed by all in Heaven; and that from age to age the zephyrs may still waft the sweet music of its love over the green grass where its founders rest as successive generations of youthful voices arises to call them the blessed of the Lord.”²⁹

Ex-Gov. Reynolds, at this time, wrote a little book urging the people of the south to accept the free school law. The repeal of the Missouri Compromise through the Dred Scot Decision, and the birth of the Republican party kindled anew the sectional feeling. So it is doubtful whether his book had a wide circulation and much influence in the interests of free education in the southern part of the State.

S. W. Moulton, who managed the free school law in the legislature, spoke of it, about the time Reynolds wrote his book, as having aroused the people from apathy because their interest lay where their money was spent. The property tax led, therefore, to suggestions and improvements in the law that could not be foreseen until experience was obtained by practice.

Since there were two extreme beliefs over the free school bill depicted, and since it appears that the opposition was connected with slavery, and in justice to both the North and the South, it would be in order to state from the evidence which we have what each section contributed and what its attitude has been to education.

The academy was supported alike by both sections, it having been first introduced by the South because southerners settled Illinois first. Though it operated in both sections for the education of leaders, the children of the poor were to be educated gratis, and a common school department for the “public” was usually attached. Manual labor was adopted principally to make it economically possible for the less wealthy to receive an education.

The apprentice laws were of southern origin, and the indentures were usually those of negroes or mulattoes. The explanation of the introduction of the apprenticeship system by the way of the South instead of the North lies in the fact that the northerner did not come until only the vestiges of indentures remained in the older eastern states; while the

²⁹ Ill. Teach., v. 4. p. 185.

southern immigration took place at an earlier time when the apprenticeship system was a little more common.

To the South should be attributed the enactment of the first free school law in 1825. The poor and ignorant for whom it was especially designed to benefit objected because they did not understand its benefits and could not pay the necessary tax for the support of schools. The South was wholly to blame for the repeal of the law.

Again, the South forged to the front in the proposed legislation for free schools, and county normal schools which were to be supported as the academies were in Kentucky and Virginia, but these plans were finally rejected by a legislature whose majority consisted of representatives from the older southern counties in Illinois.

The adoption of the recommendation of the representative leaders from both sections for a state superintendent of common schools failed, but the office was vested ex-officio in that of the Secretary of State. This was probably patterned after the Pennsylvania type.³⁰

However, the resolutions, recommendations and petitions for a separate state superintendent came almost exclusively from the newer counties of the northern and western sections which were settled by New Englanders and easterners.³¹

The growth of the question of taxation is illustrative of the attitude of northern and southern Illinois toward free schools. The legislature, besides granting the right of taxation for school purposes in a few city charters, passed a general law in 1845 which allowed communities to levy a property tax by a two-thirds majority vote for school purposes. The taxing clause was changed in 1848 to a majority vote.

The first report, issued in 1849, which dealt with an ad valorem property tax for schools, showed that \$29,947.46 was voluntarily levied by the people. Thirty of the counties levying such tax were in the northern part of the State, while six were in the southern part. In 1852, \$51,101.14 were likewise voluntarily levied by forty-three counties, thirty-six of which were northern and seven southern. Of the twenty-six coun-

³⁰ Assembly Reports, 1844, p. 103.

³¹ Assembly Reports, 1846, 1849, 1851, 1853, Jr. Const. Con., 1847.

ties that did not levy a tax, eighteen were southern and eight northern counties.³²

In the senate, the free school bill of 1855 passed by a vote of 20 to 3, and in the house, 47 to 14. An analysis of the vote relative to the section from which the representatives came shows that most of the opposition was in the southern tier of counties stretching to the east and southeast of St. Louis across the State.

Therefore, it is evident that the opposition to the idea of free education came from the old southern portion of the State. This probably was not due to the fact that these people were southern in origin for such leaders as Coles, Duncan and Edwards, always champions of free schools, migrated to Illinois from the South; but rather the opposition finds its explanation in the fact that the southern districts were economically much less able to support free schools than the fertile and commercial northern sections.

Before discussing the beginnings and characteristics of the high school, a summary of the free school law of 1855 follows. The constitutional convention of 1847 accepted the first reading of a bill which provided for a free system of public schools, and a state superintendent to give the proposal effect, but the convention omitted all mention of free schools in the final draft of the constitution. However, the leaders, associations and editors continued to agitate the same question until the legislature authorized the separation of the Department of State and the schools. It also authorized the appointment of a state superintendent and required that he prepare a bill for the reorganization of a school system, which bill was adopted in 1855. A state tax of two mills was levied on every dollar of property and the income added to the annual distribution of the common school fund; a local tax was levied by the trustees of both township and district to help maintain at least one free school in every district for six months in the year. The state common school fund was distributed in such a manner that two-thirds was given to the county on the basis of the number of white children between the ages of five and twenty-one years, and the remaining one-third on the basis of the number of townships,

³² Assembly Reports, 1849, p. 116; 1853, p. 149.

or parts of townships in each county. The money due the townships was to be distributed in proportion to the number of days of school that were actually taught.

The method of distribution of the state school fund, which benefited the poorer sections as well as the richer districts was a powerful argument in favor of free schools. They were democratic; they were the means by which children could be educated at home; they were located where they were needed; they were inexpensive. On the other hand, the successful academies had superior teachers; they were better equipped; they had more extensive subjects of study. Thus two sharply defined groups existed in the State; the one favored the common school, the other favored the academy. At one extreme, the free school was placed in a class with free negroes; at the other, it was eulogized. How the common school supplied some of the secondary education of the time follows.

CHAPTER XII.

The Beginnings and Characteristics of the Free Public High School of 1860.

The high school as a separate institution was not usually so designated, and thought of, until quite a while after the passage of the free school law of 1855. The academy had long been the means of secondary education, but the common school had even before 1850 begun to usurp the province of the former institution. The academy was the chief means of providing education for the aristocracy of society. The common people had no way to gain similar advantages for their children. The academy was open to them, but tuition charges, the cost of sending children to live away from home combined with the inaccessibility of the academy, kept the common children at home. But the working men were imbued with high ideals. Their children must have advantages provided that the parents missed. The common school was the only way open. That humble institution struggled along until we see it occupying the center of the stage of political and educational thought. Though it was called the common school, by 1860 it came to mean both the elementary school and the high school. "The high school and the common school are part of the same system. The one is the head, the other the heart. One is the branches, the other the root."¹

One of the chief ways by which the high school came to be the upper part of the common school system was through gradation. The very first mention of that idea, applied to the common schools, was the suggestion of that subject in an article for contribution to the Common School Advocate, in 1837. A year later, the Sangamo Journal printed an article on the system of schools in the State in which gradation was suggested.

¹ Ill. Teach., v. 8, p. 49.

“In addition to the primary schools * * * we must have academies or high schools and colleges. The first finishing the education of many of its students whose means will not permit them to pursue it farther, and only the more thoroughly preparing others to enter the second, where alone their scholastic pursuits can be closed.”²

The *Prairie Farmer* in 1844 advocated the establishment of a school system with three departments, because it deprecated the growing influence of the academies. “And what shall be the remedy? We do not expect a community justly appreciating education, and desirous of affording to their children the means of procuring the higher branches, will rest passive with inferior schools, neither would we desire any such lowering of the standard of education. But instead of creating independent select schools, we would have a plan something after this sort adopted. In the first place, the district should be large, and as the school increased, instead of dividing districts, sending large and small children to the same school, the school should be divided, classifying the scholars according to their progress. Where the number of scholars would admit of it, there should be at least three grades of schools. For the small children, say under ten years of age, female teachers should be employed, and the schools should be as numerous as possible, to facilitate attendance. For the next grade, the instruction and number of schools should depend upon circumstances. For the highest grade, there should be but one school within a circuit of at least three miles diameter, no matter how thickly settled the town if under ten or fifteen thousand inhabitants, and generally there should be but one such school to a township, and occasionally but one in a county.”³

Next, educational conventions discussed the merits of gradation and advocated the adoption of such a scheme in their resolutions. “Resolved, That it be earnestly recommended to school officers to establish such a classification of studies and gradation of schools as will prevent the great waste of time, effort, and money, to which our schools are now subject; and that experience proves the feasibility and profit of the following system of gradation:”

² San. Jr., Apr. 21, 1838.

³ State Supt. Rep., 1885, p. 160.

First. Primary schools, in which as many of the youngest pupils shall be taught in the full rudiments of education as one female teacher can instruct."

"Second. Grammar schools, both male and female, in which the elementary and common English studies shall be pursued, viz. —Geography, Written Arithmetic, Grammar, Reading, Spelling, and Writing; the number of these schools being smaller and the number of pupils larger than the lower grade".

"Third. One high school for each large town or city, in which the higher English branches and Languages shall be taught; the pupils to be admitted by examination from the Grammar schools, and those of Grammar schools in the same manner from the Primary schools."⁴

From the above typical citations, the first scheme of gradation included three departments, namely, primary, grammar, and high. Now, a territorial basis was also necessary. More primary than grammar schools should be established, and one higher department serving for many of the others. To carry out that idea, the policy of joining districts grew up, and the name, union, or union graded schools, became somewhat common.

The idea of establishing union districts by law was slow in developing. The law of 1825 provided that there should be at least fifteen families in a school district, but the amendment of 1827 said that there must be at least eighteen children going to school or subscribed, and the amendment in 1829 made the size of a district a purely voluntary affair. The legislature, in 1841, provided for the appointment of township trustees who were to establish districts within the township as suited the convenience and wishes of the people; as many schools could be kept in a district as the people desired. Six years later an additional amendment provided, "that districts may be altered at any time by said trustees to suit the wishes of a majority of the inhabitants in the districts interested,"⁵ and that children might be transferred from one district to another. By 1853, the practice of creating union districts had grown considerably so that the legislature occasionally legalized the action of some directors:

⁴ *Prairie Farmer*, v. 8, p. 273.

⁵ *Sess. Laws*, 1847, p. 130, sec. 46.

"Sec. 3. Said district shall be called Union School District, and shall have, enjoy, possess and exercise all rights, powers, privileges, advantages and immunities of other school districts, shall be entitled to its equal and joint proportions of the school funds, and shall be organized, regulated, controlled and governed by the laws of the state now in force, or that may be hereafter passed."^a

The free school law, two years later, provided for the establishment of union districts: "Whenever it may be desirable to establish a school composed of pupils, residents of two or more districts, or two or more townships, it shall be the duty of the respective boards of Education of each of such townships to transfer such number of the pupils residing in such townships as the boards may deem proper to the school so established in the township in which the school house is or may be located; but the enumeration of scholars shall be taken in each of such townships as if no such transfer had been made; and such school funds of the respective townships in which the pupils composing such school shall reside, and from which they shall have been transferred; and the board of that township in which the school house where such school is located shall have the control and management of such school; and the boards of each of such townships so connected for school purposes shall each pay its respective share of the entire expenses of every kind incurred in the establishment and support of such school, to be computed in proportion to the number of pupils residing in each of such townships composing such school; and each board of the townships from which pupils are transferred shall draw an order on its township treasurer, signed by its president, in favor of the township treasurer whose board shall have the control and management of such school, as the case may be, for the amount of its share of the entire expenses aforesaid of such school, and the board of the township having control and management as aforesaid of such school shall pay out of its treasury the whole amount required for the establishment and maintenance of such schools, in the manner as provided in this act for the establishment and maintenance of other schools; Provided,

^aSess. Laws, 1853, p. 186.

however, by agreement of the several boards interested therein, said school may be placed under the control and management of such persons as may be determined by a majority of said boards."⁷

The Illinois Teacher gave the reason for the name, union schools, thus: "They are called Union Schools because they afford all the advantages of a well conducted common or select school and academy for gentlemen, and the seminary for ladies; they are called graded because the pupils are classified according to their attainments; in such, the scholar may commence with the alphabet and pass from one grade to another, until prepared to engage in the common pursuits of life, or enter any college or university."⁸

Therefore, it is quite evident that the high school was a part of the union graded system. Moreover, it was essential to the union graded schools to have a high school as the capstone. "Our Union Graded Schools have demonstrated to the most skeptical that by adopting this plan they can have schools, apparatus and libraries, equal, if not superior, to our private institutions, with but a small additional expense to the present system. We look upon the establishment of the Union Graded, or Central High School to be essential to the free school system."⁹

The scheme of gradation was advocated somewhat vigorously over the State because its advocates believed that it was economical; that it was a stimulus to exertion on the part of the pupil; that classification could be made on merit; that the school system would become a selective agent; that a broader range of studies was possible; that school work could be made continuous; that more expert teaching was possible; and that better organization and administration resulted.^{9a}

From the above advantages of gradation, as were pointed out in educational thought, the framers of educational legislation were induced to make provision for graded schools in the bill of 1854. Township boards "shall have power to establish schools of different grades, to assign such number of scholars to such schools as they may think best, and to control

⁷ Sess. Laws, 1855, p. 61, sec. 37.

⁸ Ill. Teach., v. I, p. 257.

⁹ Ibid. v. 4, p. 6.

^{9a} These arguments are greatly expanded in the Illinois Teacher, Volume 4, page 90.

and regulate the admission of scholars to schools of the higher and different grades, and if on account of great distance or difficulty of access to the schools in any township, or on account of the scholar being too far advanced to prosecute his studies in any school in his township, any of the pupils could be more conveniently accommodated in any other schools, academies or colleges in this State, the board of education shall have the power to make an arrangement by which such pupils may be instructed in the most convenient school, academy or college in this state, and the expense of such instruction shall be paid out of the public funds, as may be agreed upon by the board of education.”¹⁰

The high school developed as a part of the common school system when the common schools became graded into primary, grammar and higher departments. It is true that the gradation of each of the departments took place next, but we are only concerned now with the last department. The academy may be said to have represented the upper part of the common school system in an ungraded form, with some enrichment of the curriculum. With the great power of the State behind the free common schools, the private schools and academies could not compete. Many of the private institutions accordingly, asked the state superintendent how they could be changed into high or union graded schools under the present law. By the law of 1855, as amended in 1857 and 1859, two methods were open:

1. The directors of all the districts that wanted to unite should determine the number of scholars to attend the new school, should erect, rent or purchase a building and should levy a tax on each district in proportion to the number of pupils therefrom. The academy buildings might be so selected, and the directors in the district where the school was to be located should have its control and management.

2. All district directors might elect three trustees to be styled, directors of union district No.—, in township No.—. The union directors should have power to levy a tax on all property of the union district. Pupils should be admitted from outside the union district under such rules as the trustees should see fit to establish.

¹⁰ State Supt. Rep., 1854, p. 30.

The difference in the two methods lay in the fact that, in the first, the tax was to be levied on each district in proportion to the number of pupils therefrom and the care of the school rested in the hands of the directors where the school was located. By the second plan, the directors were the trustees of the entire union district with the power to levy taxes on all of the property in the union district. Finally, the school was under the control of the directors representing the whole district.

By these provisions, private institutions could become public. Whether they did or not must be proved by investigation, although the state superintendent said, "that nearly two-thirds of all the private Academies and Seminaries that existed in the state have thrown up their organizations and reorganized under the Common School law."¹¹

A list of Illinois High Schools in Existence at the Beginning of the Civil War.

The ordinary conception is that few free high schools were in existence in the United States before the Civil War. But investigations in Massachusetts, Ohio and Illinois have shown that an unexpected number were in operation. Certainly those institutions were not our present day high schools any more than early Harvard and Yale were the universities we know today. The characteristics of the high schools in Illinois before the Civil War were clearly enough marked out to warrant the use of the term—high school.

Then, we shall give a few examples to show how we have concluded that the free high schools were established as given in the table below. First, let us take Chicago. The legislature, March 1, 1839, gave the city council power to tax for schools.

"Sec. 3. The Common Council of the City of Chicago shall have power to raise all sufficient sums of money, by taxing the real and personal estates in said city, for the following purposes, to wit: To build school houses; to establish, support and maintain common and public schools, and to supply the inadequacy of the school fund for the payment of teachers; to purchase or lease a site or sites for school houses; to erect, hire or purchase buildings suitable for said

¹¹ As an example of reorganization, see the special act allowing Crystal Lake Academy to reorganize. Sess. Laws, 1857, p. 1223.

school houses; to keep in repair and furnish the same with necessary fixtures and furniture whenever they may deem it expedient; and the taxes for that purpose shall be assessed and collected in the same manner that other city taxes are or may be.”¹²

Therefore, a free high school could have been established in Chicago. About 1840, the schools of the city were reorganized and the board of inspectors in their annual report said “Had we the means, the establishment of a High School, with two good teachers, into which might be placed a hundred of the best instructed scholars from different schools, would remedy this increasing evil.”¹³

The school committee, in 1844, advocated a high school for advanced pupils. “The lower story to be divided into two rooms, one for small boys and another for small girls, the upper room to be so divided as to give necessary recitation rooms for a High School, so that one Principal Teacher and two or three assistants shall be able to conduct the several schools, and thus give it a High School in which may be placed the more advanced scholars.”¹⁴

Again, in 1846, the inspectors called the attention of the common council to the need of “at least one school where the ordinary academic studies may be taught.”¹⁵

The school committee, the next year, in its report said, “In reference to a High School, they are of the opinion that there are insuperable objections to the establishment of such a school, independent of the inability of the city at the present time to build one.”¹⁶

However, a special committee reported a plan to the city council for the establishment of a high school, and gave the reasons why the city should have such an institution. There upon, Dec. 11, 1854, the city council “Ordered, That the Committee on Schools be directed to prepare an ordinance for the establishment of a High School in connection with our Public School System.”

“Ordered, That said Committee recommend a site for said School, and that the Superintendent of Public Schools

¹² Sess. Laws, 1838-39, p. 215.

¹³ Chi. School Rep., 1879, p. 48.

¹⁴ Chi. School Rep., 1879, p. 48.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

be requested to furnish an outline plan of a building for the accommodation of said school.”¹⁷

Jan. 23, 1855, the common council passed an ordinance establishing a high school, which institution was opened in a building erected for it, Oct. 1856.

Next take Virginia. The law of 1845 made provision for the levying of taxes in any district where two-thirds of the voters decided to tax themselves for schools. This village took advantage of the law and a year later had a high school department in operation as appears from this quotation: “We have a common school of grades in Virginia, commenced in July, conducted by two teachers, in separate departments, with eighty scholars, in which a thorough course of instruction in the English branches of Education, in Mathematics, in Latin, Greek, and French Languages, and in the ornamental branches, are ably taught. We have a third department in the same building, liberally granted by the county commissioners’ court for a nominal amount approved by the people, which will be fitted for use when the number of scholars justifies the employment of additional teachers * * * This school district and Beardstown * * * voted in May last the highest rate of taxation under the law.”¹⁸

Similarly, a union school, with a high school department was in operation in Rockton in 1851: “In the afternoon of the same day, we visited the Rockton Union School, under the Superintendence of Mr. Seely Perry, * * * In this school are realized more fully than in any other district in the county the advantages of a division of labor. There were about 160 pupils in the school, embracing classes in all stages of progress, from the alphabet up to the highest branches of classical and natural science taught in our best academies.”¹⁹

Finally, communications, and the reports of the state agent who travelled for the establishment of free schools, showed that high schools were opened, many relatively permanent, and some whose existence ended with the decay of the villages from economic conditions. The following table, perhaps, has omitted some high schools that were in existence,

¹⁷ *Chi. School Rep.* 1879, p. 50.

¹⁸ *Prairie Farmer*, v. 6, p. 86.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, v. 11, p. 160.

but it shows that the free high school had a good start by 1860.

Alton	1859	Kewanee	1859
Atlanta	1859	Lacon	1858
Belleville	1860	LeRoy	1856
Belvidere.....	1857	Lockport	1856
Bloomington	1856	Lee Union Center...	1859
New Boston.....	1860	Lyndon	1847
Brimfield	1860	Mount Vernon Acad-	
Canton	1862	emy, changed to	
Chester	1856	free school.....	1856
Chicago	1856	Nashville Academy,	
Decatur	1856-62	changed to free	
Dwight	1860	school	1858
Dixon	1857	Ottawa	1857
Eden	1856	Paris	1856-66
East Elgin.....	1856	Sparta	1856
East Pawpaw.....	1856	Peoria	1856
Franklin Grove....	1856	Plainfield	1856
Freeport	About 1851	Princeton	1857-66
Fulton City.....	1860	Prairieville	1858
Galena, Male High		Urbana Seminary,	
School and Female		changed to free	
High School.....	1857	school	1856-58
Galva	1859	Quincy	1856
Geneseo	1852-59	Rockford	1862
Galesburg, but		Rock Island.....	1858
charged tuition		Rockton	1851
for several years..	1859-60	Springfield	1858
Homer Seminary,		Vandalia	1858
changed to free		Virginia	1846
school	1858	Warsaw	1858
Jacksonville, West...	1851	Washington, Taze-	
Jerseyville, mostly		well Co.....	1858
free	1853	Waukegan	1856
Joliet	1858	Wethersfield	1859

Subjects of Study.

Since the common school included a high school department in numerous instances, it is to be expected that second-

ary subjects of study existed along with elementary subjects. Either high school subjects were contemplated, or they were being taught in some common schools before the permanent free school law was passed. The county superintendent of Stark county hoped to have the common schools so perfected, "as to be able to teach, in the most approved manner, all that our children need to learn in order to fit them for the ordinary avocations of life. They not only need to know how to read and write and cipher, but to have some knowledge of History, Natural and Mental Philosophy, Political Economy, Chemistry, Physiology, Geology and Meteorology. All these may be profitably taught in our common schools."²⁰

However, in those communities where the town charter had given the common council the right to impose a tax for the support of schools, or in those places where the people were willing by a two-thirds and then later a majority vote to tax themselves for education, or where the schools were graded, there, subjects of an advanced nature were taught. Chicago common schools in 1847, were teaching, besides such subjects as reading, writing and arithmetic, Townes' Intellectual Algebra, Baley's Algebra, Preston's District School Book-keeping, Physiology, Gales' Philosophy and Gray's Chemistry."²¹

In the Rockton Union School, subjects were taught "from the alphabet up to the highest branches of classical and natural sciences taught in our best academies."²² In Virginia, Ill., the common schools were graded so that in the upper division there was a "thorough course of instruction in the English branches of education; in mathematics; in Latin, Greek, and French Languages, and in the ornamental branches."²³ A union school at Freeport taught, besides the common branches, mathematics, natural and moral sciences, French, Greek and Latin.²⁴ At Carrollton, German, French, Latin, Greek and Spanish, in addition to the common branches, were taught in the common schools.²⁵ The county superintendent of Peoria county reported that chemistry,

²⁰ *Prairie Farmer*, v. 12, p. 236.

²¹ *Prairie Farmer*, v. 7, p. 372.

²² *Prairie Farmer*, v. II, 1851, p. 160.

²³ *Prairie Farmer*, v. 6, 1846, p. 86.

²⁴ *State Supt. Report*, 1851, p. 230.

²⁵ *House Reports*, 1853, p. 179.

algebra, physiology, ancient and United States history, and philosophy were taught in the common schools.²⁶ Will county included in the program for the common schools, astronomy, algebra, physiology, chemistry and philosophy.²⁷ Moreover, subjects of secondary character were taught in some of the common schools in the counties of Champaign, Greene, Johnson, Jefferson, Marion, Pike, Saline, Stark, Lake and Woodford according to the reports of the county superintendents of those counties for 1851.²⁸ Morgan county had a union graded school at Jacksonville wherein departments of study were included as far as those of college grade.²⁹ Jerseyville had a high school, mostly free, as a part of the common school system in which teachers were prepared for elementary instruction.³⁰ In Knox county, a union district building was constructed in which "the plan to be pursued is to select a principal capable of teaching all the branches usually taught in a high school, with sufficient assistance to accomodate the whole district."³¹

The *Prairie Farmer* found that some of the common schools were teaching mental and written arithmetic, drawing, writing, spelling, mathematical, physical, civil and political geography, astronomy, English grammar, United States history, physiology,, natural and mental philosophy, algebra, geometry, economics and the ornamental branches.³²

The subjects in the common schools were not so extensive in scope as those taught in the academies, but they were quite similar. One reason for the likeness was that the common man took his cue from the classes above him. It was the fashion for, say, "Ornamental Branches", to be taught to the children of the working people. While the parents' opportunities had been limited, the study of Latin and Greek, as in the academies, would make their children cultured. When they were arguing for the common school, the leaders thus retained part of the philosophy of the academy in the curricula of the "people's college." The other reason was that

²⁶ House Reports, 1851. app. of Supt. Report.

²⁷ House Reports, 1851. app. of Supt. Report.

²⁸ House Reports, 1851. app. of Supt. Report.

²⁹ House Reports 1853, p. 163.

³⁰ House Reports 1853, p. 163.

³¹ House Reports, 1849, p. 113.

³² *Prairie Farmer*. v. 10, 1850, p. 11.

the academies supplied many of the common teachers for the common schools. The teachers naturally taught those subjects which they studied in the academies.

At the time of the passage of the free school law, which gave a decided impetus to the formation of high schools, the educational literature had quite a little about the kind of subject matter, and its organization, that should be adopted by the high school. The Illinois Teacher printed the program of studies which appears in the list below for the guidance of school men. Chicago began its central high school in 1856 with a two year curriculum for prospective teachers, a three year English curriculum and a four year English classical curriculum. Schools reorganizing under the free school law also were advised to study the Chicago curricula for suggestions. However, it is quite probable that most of the common schools enlarged their curricula gradually rather than creating others, *de novo*. The academies, reorganized by the law of 1855, probably continued the subjects that they had taught. At any rate, the core of the curricula that were suggested continued to urge the languages, mathematics, and philosophy, which were the intellectual studies of the academy, as appears from the following programs of study:

FIRST YEAR.

First Term—Latin, or English Analysis; Algebra, Elocution and Orthography.

Second Term—Latin, or English Analysis, Algebra, History.

Third Term—Latin, or Elements of Physiology; Arithmetic; History.

SECOND YEAR.

First Term—Latin, or Rhetoric; Geometry; History or Greek.

Second Term—Latin, or Rhetoric; Geometry; History or Greek.

Third Term—Latin, or Bookkeeping; Algebra; Botany, or Greek.

THIRD YEAR.

First Term—Latin, or Natural History; Physical Geography; Trigonometry, or Greek

Second Term—Latin, or Surveying, etc.; Physiology; Natural Philosophy, or Greek.

Third Term—Latin, or Evidence of Christianity; Review of Arithmetic, etc.; Astronomy, or Greek.

FOURTH YEAR.

First Term—Mental Philosophy, or Latin; Rhetoric; Chemistry, or Greek.

Second Term—Mental Philosophy, or Latin; Civil Government; Geology, or Greek.

Third Term—Moral Philosophy, or Latin; Review of Arithmetic, etc.; Logic, or Greek.

It will be seen that there are in reality three courses marked out in this report. The first is the General Course which the main body of the school may be supposed to pursue. It is that given in the scheme omitting the alternative branches. The second, is the course preparatory to College. It is the same as the General course for the first year; but in the second and third years, substitutes Greek, and in the fourth, Latin and Greek. It may be called the Collegiate course. The third is for those who prefer not to study Latin. It differs from the General Course by substituting other studies in the place of Latin for the first three years. It is the Imperfect Course. As sounder notions of Education become prevalent, this course will become less popular and the General Course more so.”³³

The normal training curriculum of the Chicago High School consisted of a review of the common branches, physical geography, general history, ancient geography, algebra, book-keeping, botany, astronomy, physiology, natural philosophy, chemistry, geology, rhetoric, political science, mental philosophy, moral science, etymology, English literature, reading, drawing, music, recitations and the theory and practice of teaching.

The English course consisted of a review of the common branches, physical geography, general history, ancient geography, algebra, legendre, arithmetic, plane and spherical trigonometry, mensuration, surveying, navigation, book-

³³ Ill. Teacher, v. 4, p. 400.

keeping, botany, astronomy, natural philosophy, chemistry, geology, rhetoric, logic, economics, political science, mental philosophy, moral science, etymology, English literature, reading, drawing, music, German, French.

The English classical curriculum added to the English curriculum, Latin, grammar and prose, Caesar, Cicero, Virgil and Greek.³⁴

None of the high schools over the State had such an extensive program as the two above indicated. Peoria gave the following as the subjects taught in her high school in 1856:

"First Class—Spelling in connection with etymology; read and define from the Fifth Reader; Arithmetic completed and reviewed; English Grammar."

"Second Class—Mathematical and Physical Geography; Latin begun; Algebra; Bookkeeping; Spelling weekly."

"Third Class—Geometry and Trigonometry; Latin continued Natural Philosophy; Drawing; Spelling weekly."

"Fourth Class—Chemistry; Latin continued; Rhetoric and Logic; Mental and Moral Philosophy; Reading and Elocution; Spelling weekly."³⁵

Greek was to be added if enough pupils, planning to go to college, warranted the formation of a class.

Springfield had practically the same program. The first class was preparatory, and the other three classes offered Latin, Greek, mathematics, English, history and science.³⁶

Galesburg had three grades in the high school which were designated as A, B, C. All of the common branches were taught and in addition, mathematics as high as algebra, science in the form of natural philosophy, three classes in Latin, physical geography and rhetoric, composed of essays, declamations and composition.³⁷

Finally, the programs of some of the reorganized academies included such subjects as Latin, Greek, French, geometry, plane and spherical trigonometry, chemistry, philosophy and the common branches in preparation for the more advanced work.

From a study of the upper part of the common schools that were being graded, it must be concluded that some sub-

³⁴ Chicago Report, v. 3. 1856, p. 28.

³⁵ Illinois Teacher, v. 2. 1856, p. 340.

³⁶ Springfield Report, 1866, p. 26.

³⁷ Steele, History of the Galesburg Public Schools.

jects of a secondary nature were generally taught about the time of the enactment of the free school law. Moreover, it was customary to include a review of some of the common branches as the preliminary or preparatory work in the higher department. Therefore, the boundary between primary and secondary education was loosely drawn for a period of about two decades, 1855-1875.

What the province of each was had to be determined in actual practice. The high school as well as the elementary school was becoming an institution whose advantages were open to all the people. The primary schools no longer existed exclusively for the public and secondary education no longer was maintained exclusively as a privilege of the upper classes. The change to a vertical from a parallel system of education entailed no definite number of years in the length of the common school system. No conclusive evidence has been found that the early free public high schools in Illinois had a four-year program. In fact, that length of time for secondary education was not used as a basis for the classification of high schools in the State until about 1880.

Furthermore, the number of years in the grades was equally late of determination. The first mention of gradation in Illinois was in 1837, and the names, primary, intermediate and grammar designated departments which are still quite common. These departments began to be graded in the more progressive communities of the State by 1855, but there was little thought that a year's work in the elementary school should constitute one grade. Some schools had ten grades with the tenth grade the beginning class, and the first grade the most advanced grade of the elementary school, but the length of the elementary school was about six years until 1875. About that time the plan of making the first grade the first year of elementary school work and the adoption of eight years of eight grades was begun. Some schools added a year to the elementary grades to prepare for the high school examination. The year so added was called the seventh grade. Other schools took the common branches or preparatory work out of the high school and added it to the elementary school. A few high schools retained what is now the eighth grade and made a longer high school period. Therefore the

length in years of the elementary schools and many of the high schools in Illinois is the result of a generation or more of development, 1850 to 1880, rather than the adoption, between 1840 and 1850, of the plan of the eight year highly organized volkschule of Prussia as Dr. Judd claims.

High School Entrance Requirements.

The academy, as has been shown in chapter four, admitted almost anyone who was able and willing to pay for instruction; the common school, from necessity, received part of its support in tuition charges before the free school law was passed. Neither were the equipment and the length of the term, nor the quality of instruction comparable to that which was given in the academy until advantages had been gained by the common school in public support, and in the classification and gradation of its pupils. One result of grading the common school, was the imposition of standards that determined when a pupil finished one department and was ready to enter another. In other words, entrance requirements were imposed which consisted of a combination of age and the completion of certain more or less formal work which had been set as a requirement of a particular department. Entrance to the primary school was usually based on age, while it was expected that one had completed the grammar school, or its equivalent, before entering the high school.

At least twenty-six of the high schools—practically all of them growing out of the common school—listed above required that pupils entering the high school pass an examination as a condition of entrance. In other words, entrance requirements were characteristic of the free public high school by 1860.

Taxation.

It has been shown that the school law of 1825 provided for local taxes and the distribution of two per cent of the yearly State revenues for the maintenance of free schools. The legislature repealed the local tax in 1827, and the State tax in 1829. The tax feature of the bills of 1835 and 1841 were annulled, but the legislature in 1845 gave any district the right to levy taxes by a two-thirds majority vote. Also, some cities were given special charters in which the right to

tax the people for the support of schools was granted. Moreover, the same authority legalized the action of some school directors who had levied a tax for the maintenance of free schools at the instance of the people of the district. The final step was taken by the law of 1855, which made it mandatory to tax the people for the support of the schools.^{37a}

Since the high school had grown up as a part of the common school in its process of gradation, or had been created by the city councils as a part of the public school system for the given city, or had been an academy that reorganized under the free school law, a second distinguishing characteristic was that it was publicly supported.

Public School Boards.

For a considerable time before the passage of the free school law, townships were incorporated for educational purposes under the control of elected trustees, and districts within the townships were established to suit the convenience of the people, and were administered by directors who were elected for that purpose. The law of 1855 added the third step which made it possible to have directors of the districts that were to unite, appoint a board, to control the newly created union district. The interpretation by the State Superintendent of the law of 1857, which was a restatement of some of the disputed sections of the law of 1855, made the board for the union district representative of the whole district. Finally, the legislature, in 1865, restated the union district clauses of the previous school laws, obviously to eliminate the troublesome questions of jurisdiction that had arisen in practice.

"A majority of the directors of each of two or more districts may consolidate said districts and appoint three directors for the union district so formed, who shall be styled, "Directors of Union District No. . . ., Township No. . . .," who shall have all the powers conferred by law upon other school directors. The proceedings of the act of consolidation shall be signed by a majority of each of the concurring boards of directors, and delivered to the trustees of the proper town-

^{37a} The State tax for 1856 was \$606,809.51; for 1866, \$750,000. The local tax for 1856 was \$341,964; for 1866, \$2,078,335. Common school fund 1856, was \$3,005,927.

ship, and shall be evidence of such consolidation, and upon receiving a copy of proceedings, it shall be the duty of the trustees to change the map of the township in accordance therewith, and file the same with the clerk of the county court. The separate boards of directors shall then be dissolved and the union directors shall draw lots for their respective terms of office and be thereafter elected as provided in the forty-second section of the act.²⁸

A free public high school not only was an institution that was supported by taxation, and that imposed entrance requirements which were based on elementary education, but it was an institution that was controlled by a board of directors who were elected by the people.

The concluding paragraphs summarize the chapter. Public boards of education administered the high school and the common school as part of the same system, even though the former developed from the latter in the process of gradation and unionization. Schools were first graded into primary, grammar and high departments, and later, each department was graded. More primary than grammar, and more grammar than higher departments were necessary; hence the policy of creating union districts developed in which one institution received the pupils from several districts.

Private institutions reorganized under the free school law and received the benefits of public support. The resolutions adopted by city councils, the reports of the State Superintendent and the State Agent, and newspaper articles showed that about fifty high schools were in operation in Illinois by 1860.

The subjects of study that were taught in some of the common schools were secondary as well as elementary, but a distinct attempt was made to introduce curricula for the use of the high school that had many of the features of the more formal subjects of the academy. However, pupils were generally admitted to the high school only upon the completion of, and the formal examination in certain elementary subjects. The school itself was controlled and supported by the public.

²⁸ Sess. Laws, 1865, p. 117.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Establishment of the Free Public High School.

The present high school system in the State of Illinois has developed solely neither from the township nor the independent district system, but rather it is the product of the growth of the township idea, of the evolution of union districts under special charter, and of the development of districts under general law. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to consider these three phases in a general way.

Township High Schools.

People of the central west have been familiar with the Northwest Ordinances which made land grants for school purposes on the basis of townships or subdivisions of them. In 1841, the legislature had gone so far as to allow the inhabitants of a township to become incorporated for the establishment of public schools. By the same act, township trustees were to be elected whose duty it was to district the territory to suit the wishes and convenience of the people in any neighborhood. However, many of the districts so established were too small to support all grades of the common school. Some localities had overcome that difficulty, by about 1850, by joining districts. Others advocated the outright adoption of a township basis for school organization.

Supt. Edwards prepared the free school bill after that plan, but the legislature decided to cling to the mongrel district-township combination. However, some attempts were almost immediately made, in 1857, to adopt a large territory as the basis for the organization of a high school:

“The inhabitants of said townships shall have the power to unite together for school purposes, and select the site or sites for school houses, and to use their surplus funds for the creation of a suitable building for a high school for the use

of both of said townships. They may purchase suitable libraries and apparatus; and employ suitable teachers for such school or schools; they may arrange among themselves in respect to the number of children sent, and money furnished by each township.”¹

The above quotation is the earliest piece of legislation that has been found for the creation of a township high school. It should be noted that the high school thus to be established was so ordered by a special charter rather than a creation of the free school law. Also, a few years later, the inhabitants of Princeton took the customary recourse of special charter organization:

“All territory now included within the boundaries of the township of Princeton, in the county of Bureau * * *, together with such territory as hereafter may be added thereto, be and is hereby established a common high school district, to be known as the Princeton High School District.”²

The period for special charter legislation, however, ended about 1870 and the legislature incorporated the township high school plan in the general school law of 1872. Under the provisions of that law which has been amended from time to time as necessity seemed to require, seventy-one township high school districts are now in existence.

Only two districts were organized by a law of 1905 which was enacted with the expectation that more elastic provisions for township high schools had thus been created. In 1911, a law was passed which sought to make the establishment of community high schools possible. Since the Supreme Court declared the last law unconstitutional, in 1916, after one hundred ninety-one schools had been organized by its provisions, the legislature enacted the law of 1917 which contains some of the most prominent features of the legal foundation for secondary education in Illinois today.

By the provisions of the five above named distinctive township laws, a variety of high school districts were legal and have been established:

1. About half of the township districts in Illinois at the present time follow the lines of the congressional township.

¹ Sess. Laws, 1857, p. 1136.

² Sess. Laws, 1867, v. 3, p. 18.

2. Two or more adjoining townships could establish a high school.

3. Two or more adjoining districts were permitted to have a township high school organization.

4. Parts of adjoining townships were allowed to organize for township high schools.

5. The remainder of a township not included in a township high school district could form a township high school.

6. A school district with a population of at least two thousand might organize in township form.

7. A city with not less than one thousand or more than a hundred thousand inhabitants could use the township basis for school purposes.

8. If a township were divided by a navigable stream and there were a political town on each side, both in the same township, each town could organize as a separate township high school district.

9. The inhabitants of any contiguous and compact territory, whether in the same or different townships, might establish a township high school.

10. The law of 1917 includes the whole State as high school territory, either in the form of districts already maintaining high schools, or non-high school districts which must pay the tuition of their pupils in districts that do support high schools.

From these indicated territorial bases for the establishment of township high schools, it is at once evident that the surveyed congressional township is by no means the sole factor in the size of the high school districts. About half of the districts are determined by township lines; some follow the practice provided for in the laws of 1841, which permitted townships or fractional townships to form one school district; others follow the old method of uniting districts which began to be legally recognized about 1850; still others are similar to the general law of 1872, which permitted the city board of education to be elected when the population of the district reached two thousand. Finally, the distinctive new features have obliterated formal boundary lines so that the basal district is that of a community which is able to maintain an efficient school.

At any rate, the larger district for township organization has made it possible to supply the financial resources requisite to the education of the children of the district more adequately than can be done in smaller districts. Not only is the unit of taxation larger, but the township has the legal right to levy the full rate of taxation for secondary education which is allowed in other districts for both elementary and secondary education. Thus twice the amount of money can be raised in the same unit for high schools under the township organization, as can be raised in the same unit for secondary education under district organization.

Therefore, township high school organizations should be superior because they are able to pay higher salaries which command better qualified teachers, and because they can furnish superior equipment in buildings and grounds. The secondary educational opportunities for the children are thereby increased. But a disadvantage has arisen because of the separation and the lack of articulation between the elementary and the secondary schools under township organization. A closer unification among all the schools of the township was contemplated by the organizers and advocates of the township idea about the time when the charters were given to school districts.^{2a}

School Districts Under Special Charter.

It has been shown that a great many academies were chartered by special and separate acts of the Illinois legislature even in spite of the general corporation laws that were on the statute books at the same time. A similar practice has prevailed in relation to the common schools. When villages were incorporated some provisions were made for the establishment of education, and occasionally special charters were granted for the creation of certain school territory in and near the town itself.

The boundaries of school districts from 1850 to 1870 were almost continually changing, sometimes because better educational opportunities could be provided, at other times, because quarrels ensued over such questions as the levying of

^{2a} Mr. Edwards gave a thorough exposition of the arguments for township organization in 1855. Mr. Bateman and other leaders have since restated Mr. Edwards' arguments.

taxes, the employment of teachers, and the location and construction of buildings. One outgrowth in the change of district lines was the recognition of some of the united territory by the legislature. Some of the special charters thus granted conferred powers on the new districts that were in opposition to the free school laws. In several cases, the right to ascertain the qualities of common school teachers and certificate them was taken from the county superintendent, a power conferred on him by general law, and bestowed on the board of education for the new district.^{2b} Moreover, the law of 1859 stated that no teacher should be paid out of the State funds unless he received a certificate from the county superintendent. However, the special legislation granted the districts with charters the right to receive their share of the school money.

According to Supt. Etter, "in many of these districts there is not even an examination as to the qualifications required, and persons are employed to teach without authority, and in direct violation of the plain provisions of school law"³ He continued to say that several refused to return school statistics in the proper manner or even at all.

Although some districts tried and did evade the free school principle under special charter which granted the board the right to fix the rate of tuition in public schools,^{3a} nevertheless all of them had a larger district than was common and many of them provided and carried into execution the plans for free schools of all grades. Besides, the free education of all the youth from six to twenty-one was to be provided in higher as well as primary schools whose length of term was quite above the average of the six months required by the law of 1855. Among some of the very early high schools of the State were those districts with special charters. For instance, Springfield, Galesburg, Lacon and Lee Union Center had high schools established before 1860. Finally, the board under special charter was given the authority to levy a tax on the whole district, but the rate of taxation was limited by the terms of the charter.

^{2b} See Decatur, Charleston, Kickapoo and Paris special charters.

³ State Supt. Report, 1875, p. 141.

^{3a} See Galesburg charter.

Since most of these districts under special charters, given about the Civil War period, have materially changed in economic and social conditions, the annulment or the amendment of the charters, to meet the demands of present day secondary education would be advantageous. For instance, the maximum tax rate of one per cent on the district may be no longer justifiable. Some of the cities with old charters have cast them aside in order to make more modern organizations, but in 1906, thirty-seven districts still remained.

School Districts Established by General Law.

The free school law of 1855 gave a decided impetus to the development of common schools that were in operation at the time of its passage, and made it possible to create new institutions that were free, either directly as common schools or indirectly by the reorganization of academies and select schools:

"It is highly gratifying to be able to state that, while a considerable number of these institutions are still in operation in various portions of the State, two-thirds of those in existence two years since have given place to the Public Schools, or been themselves transformed into Union Graded Schools, *under the law* * * * Scarcely two years have elapsed since the Free School System went into operation in this State, and in that brief period it has nearly swept the entire field of the thousands of Private Schools which then existed."⁴

The number of union graded schools that were reported for 1862 was 402, but it was unreasonable to expect that all of that number were thoroughly graded on the basis of scholarship and attainment so that each of them had a higher department of a secondary nature. "That very many of them are organized and conducted on the true basis, is certain, as I know from personal observation. We have graded schools which in their principles of instruction, are not surpassed by those of any other state within my knowledge."⁵ Superintendent Bateman continued by saying that many schools adopted the title of union graded schools that were unworthy of the name.

⁴ State Supt. Report, 1857-8, p. 16.

⁵ State Supt. Report, 1861-2, p. 21.

The terms, common school, graded school, or union graded schools, were used by State Superintendents in their reports from 1855 to 1867 without making any distinction between elementary and high schools. At the latter date, Mr. Bateman stated "that one or more advanced schools, or high schools or departments, have been established in nearly every county of the State".⁶ The number of public high schools reported for 1869-70 was 108, around which figure the variation was slight for a period of ten years or so, because the standards for classification and the conception of what a high school ought to be were continually changing:

"The report of high schools for 1880 shows apparently a smaller number than in 1878; but the difference is due to the fact that I asked that only those schools should be classed as high schools which had a regular course of high school study of three or four years' duration—a course that was actually taught to the pupils in the school. As a result of this request, one county that in 1878 reported seven high schools, in 1880 reported none; another county changed from twelve to three; another, from seven to two."'⁷

At this point it will be valuable to look at the district system which had grown to be very pernicious by 1870. The previous laws allowed the township trustees to district the territory although the inhabitants in the township had a permissive voice in fixing boundaries. At one extreme were the trustees, at the other, the district directors with no authority in determining the size of the district. Frequently one set of trustees would make large districts so that all grades of a common school could be supported. A succeeding board, some member of which living in the large district was wealthy and had no children, would cut the district in two and ruin the higher schools. In the continually changing districts, territory of all sizes was included from those that were large to those that were so small that a single family had a whole district all to itself.⁸

The law of 1872 took away the right of township trustees to district the territory at will and gave the district directors the independent right to consolidate districts in contiguous

⁶ State Supt. Report, 1867, 1868, p. 127.

⁷ State Supt. Report, 1879, 1880, p. 92.

⁸ State Supt. Report, 1865, 1866, p. 81.

territory. Moreover, the general assembly recognized the necessity for other provisions for secondary education than those made for township high schools and districts with special charters by incorporating in the law of 1872 the sections which gave a community the right to elect an independent board when the population numbered two thousand. The board was expressly given the power to provide free schools of all grades for at least six months in such a district.

From 1872 on to about 1890, it was quite common to have superintendents report that districts in their towns had consolidated and one central high school established for the entire district. Also, about the same time, high schools began to be established in districts under the control of district directors. These institutions were not as well established nor as thorough as the high schools established under township organization or under union districts with special charters, or in cities or villages with boards of education. The legality of high schools in all of these districts is considered next.

Legal Decisions.

Free public high schools may be said to have been firmly established in Illinois when the Supreme Court affirmed the constitutionality of certain sections of the school law that referred to high schools, either directly or by implication: "The legislature of the State has the power to enact any and all laws proper for the government and welfare of the people of the State not prohibited by the constitution of the United States, or of this State."⁹

Now the constitution of the State of Illinois, adopted in 1870, gave the legislature the right to provide for a system of free common schools: "The General Assembly shall provide a thorough and efficient system of free schools, whereby all the children of this State may receive a good common school education."¹⁰

But in the case of *Richards vs. Raymond* it was maintained that a tax could not be collected for the support of a township high school because such a school was outside of the meaning of the term, free common school. In that de-

⁹ *Richards vs. Raymond*, Supreme Court Rep., v. 92, Ill. p. 612.

¹⁰ Constitution of Ill., 1870, Art. 7. Sec. 1.

cision, the Supreme Court affirmed the decision of the Appellate Court in the following clear and decisive manner:

‘A school of this character is certainly a free school, within the meaning of the constitution. That free schools may be graded and classified so that scholars that may be more advanced in their studies may not be hindered or delayed in the progress of their studies by others, would seem to be within the spirit of the constitution, that contemplates the creation of a thorough and efficient system of free schools. That one may be denominated a high school and another in the same township a district school, cannot affect the question in the least.’

‘But the argument is that the school established is not a common school or a school where the children of the State may receive a good common school education, and hence inhibited by the constitution. No definition of a common school is given or specified in the constitution, nor does that instrument declare what course of studies shall constitute a common school education. How can it be said that a high school is prohibited by the constitution and not included within the definition of a common school? The phrase, a common school education, is not easily defined. One might say that a student instructed in reading, writing, geography, English grammar and arithmetic, had received a common school education; while another who had more enlarged notions on the subject might insist that history, natural philosophy and algebra should be included. It would thus be almost impossible to find two persons who would in all respects agree in regard to what constituted a common school education.’

“Indeed, it is a part of the history of the State, when the constitution was framed, that there was a great want of uniformity in the course of study prescribed and taught in the common schools of the State. In the larger and more wealthy counties, the free schools were well graded and the course of instruction of a high order, while in the thinly settled and poorer counties the old district system was still retained and the course of instruction prescribed was of a low order.” * * *

“But * * * while the constitution has not defined what good common school education is, and has failed to prescribe

a limit it is no-part of the duty of the courts of the State to declare * * * what particular branches of study shall constitute a common school education. That may be, and doubtless is, a proper question for the determination of the legislature, and as a law has been enacted by it which does not appear to violate the constitution, it is not the province of the courts to interfere." * * *

"If the law was constitutional, then the levy and collection * * * of a tax to maintain the school was proper, although the course of study prescribed was different from that contemplated by law." ¹¹

In considering the law relative to the course of study in the common school, one section of the law of 1845 gives the course of study a secondary scope: "No school shall derive any benefit from the public or town fund unless the textbooks used in said schools shall be in the English language: Provided, that this section may not apply to those who may desire to study any foreign language in said school for the purpose of learning the same." ¹²

The amendment to the school law in 1865 farther enlarged the right to teach secondary subjects in the common school. After listing elementary subjects, the law said, "that nothing herein contained shall prevent the teaching in common schools, of other and higher branches than those enumerated in this section." ¹³

In the case of *Rulison vs. Post*, the Supreme Court decided that the phrase, "other and higher branches", was within the jurisdiction of the common school directors: "We are, therefore, clearly of the opinion that the General Assembly has invested school directors with the power to compel the teaching of other and higher branches than those enumerated, to those willing to receive instruction therein, but has left it purely optional with parents and guardians whether the children under their charge shall study such branches." ¹⁴

In another decision, the same judicial body said that in determining the subjects to be taught in the common school,

¹¹ Sess. Laws, 1845, p. 64, Sec. 58.

¹² Sess. Laws, 1845, p. 64, Sec. 58.

¹³ Ibid. 1865, p. 121, Sec. 18.

¹⁴ *Rulison vs. Post*, Supreme Court Rep., v. 79, p. 567.

the school directors thereby had the constitutional right to determine what subjects constituted other and higher branches. To the court it was clear that the subjects taught in the high school must be founded upon and more advanced than the subjects that were taught in the elementary school; otherwise, the high school defeated the purpose for which it was created. "Here, then, in the powers of common school directors, is the power to decide what branches of study shall be taught in the high school, what text-books shall be used, and to prescribe necessary rules and regulations for the management and government of the school."¹⁵

Finally, the Supreme Court decided that it was constitutional for the officers of cities to levy taxes for the support of common schools under the provision of the general law.¹⁶

Thus, the court decided that the constitution recognized a graded school as a free common school. A high school then, as the upper part of the graded school, which had been recognized more or less since 1855, was within the spirit of the constitution. Moreover, what constituted a good common school education would be determined from the practice of communities: the wealthier supporting elementary and higher schools, the poorer, only the primary schools. Since all grades of the common school were in existence at the time of the adoption of the constitution which made the establishment of a good common school system mandatory on the legislature, the assembly acted within its rights in allowing localities to levy a tax for the support of high schools.

Older laws gave a legal basis for the subjects of study in high schools. The latter must teach subjects more advanced than the elementary schools else it defeated the purpose of its creation. Although many other litigations have occurred as to the legality of the high school, these decisions may be said to have given that institution its first judicial standing in Illinois as a part of the free common school system.

Not only have these decisions affirmed the legality of the high school as the upper part of the graded common school system, but they have been at least one factor in the growth of secondary education from about 1880 to 1900. The report of

¹⁵ *People vs. Martin Van Allen*, Supreme Court Rep., 1877, p. 307.

¹⁶ Supreme Court Rep., v. 89, p. 297.

the state superintendent for 1869-70 listed one hundred eight high schools but did not classify them. About the same number were reported for 1880 but the number was doubled at the end of the next decade and increased about thirty-three per cent by 1900. The greatest early increase in high schools was represented by those districts with special charters. The most rapid development from 1880 to 1900 has taken place in cities and villages with boards of education. The following table shows that comparative growth in high schools since the legal decisions that have been cited were made:

Years	1880	1891	1900-02
Township high schools.....	6	9	21
Special charters	33	43	34
General law—board	47	137	212
General law—directors	24	34	71
	—	—	—
Total	110	223	338 ¹⁷

Likewise, the list of accredited high schools has rapidly developed. In 1877, when the policy of accrediting began, six high schools were so recognized; in 1900, there were two hundred thirty such institutions. ¹⁸

A summary of the establishment of the free public high school shows that it developed from township organizations, districts under special charter, and general school laws. The earliest legislation for township organization for high school purposes was enacted in 1857. Princeton followed in 1866, and the school law of 1872 contained the township plan. The township laws of 1905, 1911 and 1917 were enacted for the purpose of making township high schools easier of establishment. By the provisions of these distinctive acts, a variety of high school districts have been legalized and established. A somewhat superior organization in comparison with the ordinary district has been possible through the township plan which began when the policy for granting special charters for union school districts was common.

Following the precedent of granting charters to academies by special enactments, the legislature, to 1870, in spe-

¹⁷ State Supt. Reports., 1879-80, 1891-92, 1900-02.

¹⁸ State Supt. Reports, 1900, p. 76.

cial acts sanctioned the creation of certain independent school districts which, in spite of the occasional violation of the general school law, established high schools comparatively early. Since many of the districts with special charters have materially changed in social and economic conditions, the amendment or annulment of these charters would be beneficial.

The law of 1855 hastened the creation of common schools, but made it possible for private institutions to become public. In the more advanced, thickly populated, and wealthier communities, the upper part of the union graded schools constituted the high school, although the latter term was not used denotatively by State Superintendents until 1867, when about one hundred institutions were reported. The number of high schools that were reported increased very slowly for a decade because the standards of what was, or should be, high schools were rapidly changing. However, general provision was made, in 1872, for the creation of an independent board, when the population of a community reached two thousand, with the power to levy a tax on property to support free schools of all grades.

The free public high school may be said to have been established in Illinois when the Supreme Court decided that certain sections of the laws of 1872 and 1874, which referred to the common and high schools, were constitutional. A township high school was a free school, it was a part of the common school, and a tax for its support was constitutional in the judgment of the highest court. Directors were within the limits of the law in requiring and determining what constituted "other and higher branches". Moreover, taxes that were levied in cities for the support of common schools were legal, but no litigation over the high schools was found, where the system had been established under special charter.

CHAPTER XIV.

A Summary of Some Earlier Influences Affecting Later Development and Practice.

The earliest attempts to establish schools in Illinois were wholly individualistic; even the policy of the State to the middle of the nineteenth century was that of *laissez faire*. Generally, provisions of various kinds were made for academic and common education, but the carrying into effect of most of these provisions was left almost entirely to individual will and caprice. Democracy was conceived as a plan of action whereby each person did as he pleased.

In contrast to that attitude, socialization is more nearly characteristic of the present plan for secondary education. The State has developed a definite policy of making that education possible for all the youth, since the whole State has been made high school territory, either in the form of non-high school districts that are required to pay the cost of a four-year secondary education, in high school areas, or districts that maintain acceptable institutions. Moreover, territorial limits, instead of following certain surveyed or customary lines, are conceived in terms of a community that has sufficient assessable property, and enough prospective pupils to support an efficient high school. Illinois is pre-eminent in the advance that the community high schools are making. But the State will have taken another important step when it requires that all the children who can profit from secondary education are in school. Then will the democratic ideal of equality of opportunity begin to function more truly.

As the State has developed organizing and administrative functions, the position of the church in relation to public education has changed. The colonial Latin grammar school was a sectarian institution, but the academy divorced the church from the denominational aspect, so that, while the

latter was founded in many instances by the church, its pupils were freed from subscribing to any creed, mode of worship, or religious test. Thus the academy was the transition institution between the denominational colonial Latin grammar school and the secularized public school. From the discussion of the academy in Part I, both the religious and semi-public aspects in the founding, management, and support of the academy have appeared. When the State in its development had reached the point of public support of education, the cardinal principle of the complete separation of the church and the State was essential.

A necessary feature of free public education is that the wealth of the State shall pay for the education of the children of the State. The academy, of course, was supported by the sale or rents of public land, interest from the common school fund, endowments, and tuition. The public domain in Illinois has practically disappeared but the common schools today receive their share of a fund that was created in part by the conditions laid down by Congress for the admission of Illinois in the Union. Although subsequent provisions have been made for the increase of the fund, Illinois, as most other states has not shown that she really believes in providing the greatest opportunity for her children, because the rate of state taxation has remained practically the same since the enactment of the free school law of 1855. Of course the value of property has constantly increased but probably at a less proportion than the growth of the needs of the school. Because a two mills state tax was levied in 1855 on property, is no justification for the same rate and method of taxation in 1919.

Property in land as a basis for taxation was more equitable when land was easily obtainable by all. Real estate was an acceptable index of wealth, but to use that as the principal method of taxation today, exempts large quantities of wealth in other forms. No logical reason exists to place an increasing burden on the rural districts. For that reason, if for no other, a legislature controlled by agricultural interests strives to prevent the increase in taxation.

More progressive kinds of taxation, such as that levied in proportion to one's ability to pay, would make it possible

to raise enough money so that no maximum rate for either state or locality need be written in the law. Hence a larger local fund could be raised for educational purposes, and more state money would be available for distribution.

Illinois still cherishes the out-worn principle of distributing funds according to the school population. The law of 1855 inaugurated a policy of so distributing the state tax and common school fund that the less able communities would be aided by those who were more able to pay, but it was repealed because the rate of assessment was so unequal in each district, and the wealthier sections wanted their state school tax returned to their own districts for their own schools. It is entirely conceivable that certain sections in some parts of southern Illinois have found it impossible to provide both elementary and secondary education at all equal to that which has been provided in the central and northern districts of the State. The latter territory should be taxed by the State and the money so distributed that the children of the former will have a more equitable opportunity.

The abolition of individual tuition payment for non-resident pupils in high school areas as provided by the law of 1917 is a partial equalizing of opportunity for secondary education. The academy and the common school usually received fees before the free school of 1855 made taxation mandatory for the support of the latter and permitted the former to re-organize as a public institution. Even then, there were instances in which tuition was charged for secondary education. Galesburg received a special charter in 1859 which allowed the city council to fix the rate of tuition. For a few years charges were made, so it was said, not to unnecessarily compete with the college academy in town.

At least any school district was permitted to charge tuition for non-resident pupils. Such cities as Springfield, Peoria and Jacksonville made tuition charges for non-resident pupils as soon as the free school law was in operation. Until recently, pupils who lived outside of a school district paid their own tuition in other districts unless their own district consented to pay the rate demanded by the board where the pupil was attending school. Legal residence rather than the ownership of property was necessary to entitle one to free tui-

tion, although children that were apprenticed could claim free tuition in the district in which the man to whom they were apprenticed lived.

In 1913, a law was enacted that provided for the payment of the tuition of high school pupils by the district in which the pupil lived to the district where the pupil attended high school. That law was superceded two years later by a law which allowed the tuition to be paid out of the distributable fund by the county superintendent before the money was apportioned to the county. Finally, the law of 1917 required that the non-high school territory of the State shall pay the tuition of their pupils to the district where a high school is maintained. So far as the State as a whole is concerned, individual tuition payment has been entirely abolished.

Many of the ideas in relation to education that have been conceived at an earlier date have taken a long time to realize in practice. The manual labor aspect of the academies purported to make education economically possible, as well as to give the pupils an intelligent understanding of agriculture and industry so that they could perform these pursuits more advantageously in later life. But it was not until 1877 that much the same arguments began to be cited in favor of manual training in high schools. The educational leaders divided on the question as to whether manual training ought to be a cultural or a vocational subject of study. At the present time, all degrees of these two ideas are mingled but the mixture is clarifying somewhat in that the junior high school is taking the ground that it should provide an opportunity for a large range of vocational subject matter in order that the pupil may better understand the constitution of social life; while the senior high school is maintaining that it should provide vocational training along the line for which the pupil is fitted mentally and socially. Some of the high schools in Illinois are beginning to realize these two conceptions.

Other schools have progressed only a little beyond the conceptions underlying the aim of secondary education in the earlier periods. The colonial Latin grammar school existed in order to give the ministerial class advanced education in preparation for college. The academy was partly a protest against that idea so that the lawyer, for instance, found an op-

portunity for the study of his profession. However the academy ministered to the wants and needs of the upper middle and wealthier people in Illinois. The common school system was a demand by the people for equal rights in education. It found its aims and wants similar, hence it must furnish the same advantages to the public. Therefore, in the earlier years of the high school, programs were copied from the academy. The languages, mathematics, some science and history formed the center of the curricula which were designated as classical, general, English and English classical. The subject matter offered in the high school programs emphasized the idea of formal discipline but a justification for the same material in the high schools now must be based on a different psychology.

The examinations in many of the high schools have shown also little development from formalism. In fact, the method of examination in numerous academies and some of the older high schools had some of the advantages that the present high school examinations have lost. It is true that part of the examination was rigorous, but there was the frequent opportunity for the patrons to come in contact with the work of the school. A stimulus was given to the pupils, while the parents learned the needs of the school. Many of the examination days were occasions for social gatherings which are frequently omitted now. The parents met at the picnic dinner and mingled in a friendly way such as the social center movement is trying to advance. The high school must be a functional institution in the community where it exists, or like the grammar school and the academy, it will be superceded by an institution more in consonance with the life about it.

The academy was unable to reach all of the people, and as a class institution it had to give way to a school for the people. It had, however, a distinct relationship to the common school in preparing teachers, and the normal school is its successor in that respect. A bill of 1835 attempted to set up a state system of county normal academies for the preparation of teachers for the common schools. Some academies were instituted, advertised, and designated as places where prospective teachers could be trained. One of the arguments in favor of the union graded school was that it prepared teachers for the lower departments. County superintendents and

teachers' conventions urged the formation of higher schools for teachers. The State created the first normal school in 1857 and others since, as well as making it legal, in 1869, for the establishment of county normal schools.

But the high schools seem never to have lost the idea. Chicago created a department in the high school in 1856 for the instruction of teachers. That course continued in the same institution for several years and then was separated and enlarged into the Chicago Normal School. Little evidence exists that the movement found more than a scholastic encouragement in the high schools over the State until the last two decades. One was supposed to be well qualified to teach the common branches if he had the additional training of the high school. Township high schools have recently taken a real interest in preparing rural teachers. Those institutions are better able to assume the function of preparing rural teachers than the city high schools whose problems are different. Therefore, the State might subsidize teacher training courses in certain designated township high schools in order to encourage and develop this movement that has begun to function more satisfactorily for the country districts.

A reorganization, however, is needed for the county educational department. When Illinois was admitted as a State, the type of local government adopted was that of a county commissioners' court elected at large. One of the commissioners had the important function of supervising the public land of the county, as school commissioner, therefore, his functions consisted of little else. The office of county superintendent grew out of the commissioner office. In spite of the suggestions that the county superintendent supervise the rural schools, that officer's functions have remained inspectoral and clerical.

A county board should be elected to represent the people, but which has the duty to select a county chief executive officer whose business it would be to administer the schools of the county as the city superintendent manages those of the city. Instead of the county being supreme in itself, as many of the Illinois counties are, it should become a unit in the educational administration of the whole State.

While some superior men have held the office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and while the duties

and importance of that office have increased, the same method of election occurs as was established by the law of 1855. Political election has little educational significance, and political prejudices and ideals can be satisfied in the election of the governor who should use his appointive power to select a state board of education. The most important business of the state board would be to appoint a chief executive officer without regard to residence, party, religion, race or sex. This officer should fill the highest educational position in the State not excepting the presidency of the state university. Among the assistants that the state superintendent appointed should be one whose concern would be chiefly with secondary education. The entire State, with the county as the educational administrative unit, could then be developed according to its needs and the interests of any locality.

With the creation of state and county supervisory units, it would be possible to achieve and advance the aims of the educational institutes that began in the early history of the common school. In the more progressive places, by 1850, institutes were held that had a genuine educational significance because superior institute leaders conducted local and state conventions as schools, rather than as social conventions which are held today. Granted the value of the inspirational institute, teachers of the elementary and secondary school ought to be so organized in their conventions that they could be graded and classified according to their needs. The morning sessions might be thus organized in classes which actually recited. The conductor and teachers would have an opportunity to discuss their problems in common. The afternoon should be spent in actual study of a problem for the meeting the following morning. An institute so conducted for a week, and the problems so studied, followed up for the year by the state and county supervisors, would be a vital force in the elementary and secondary education of today.

Such a plan would involve a closer connection of the school with the public libraries and a farther development of the school libraries. Some of the earlier academies were to perform the function of supplying books to the surrounding public. A little later the State attempted to establish school libraries but a recent survey has shown that the Illinois high

schools, to say nothing of the elementary schools, are inadequately supplied with library facilities. It is true that standards for accrediting have required certain library equipment but the development in supplying magazines, newspapers, reference books and fiction for secondary education is just in its beginning.

Also, as was suggested in the last chapter, the State has just started on the course of disregarding district lines for a more reasonable basis for the establishment of high school centers. A brighter period is commencing for the sanctity of tradition and custom are being called in question. The limitation of secondary education to four years, the length of the school year, part of the subject matter in the curricula, the sharp break between the high and the elementary schools and much of the school legislation are to be regarded as historical accidents, rather than inviolable and sacred principles.

The history of the secondary institutions, the laws and practices that surrounded the academy and the early high school, give an intelligent conception of secondary education in Illinois at the present time. Experience thus becomes an intelligent guide for future action.

CHAPTER XV.

Summary and Conclusion.

Illinois is an excellent example of a midwestern state that was settled by people from the older states of the East and the South for the purpose usually, of raising their economic status by taking advantage of the relatively free western land. When the State was admitted as a member of the Union, the congressional land grants, the basis of which was created by the Northwest Ordinances, were accepted by the people for educational purposes. The earliest schools were individualistic and sporadic attempts that were attended with meager success in a hostile, wilderness country. More concentrated action occurred when the legislature, beginning in 1818, adopted the policy of granting special charters to groups of individuals for the creation of semi-public academies. Some of the requirements were to make it possible for the poor of the community to be educated at public expense; other provisions looked forward to the time when all classes in the locality, including the girls, should receive free tuition if the funds of the institution permitted it. All charters required religious freedom, but allowed the administrative board to perform any other function that was not contrary to law. The purposes for which the academy was established, the form of administrative organization, and the financial support varied.

The aims of the academy were to disseminate useful knowledge; to give women high intellectual and moral culture; to fit youth for the various duties of life; to prepare teachers for the common schools; to promote science and literature; to develop a sound physical body; to act as libraries; to establish a system of manual labor, and to educate the children of the common man. The manner of election, the number, and the term of the trustees followed no general rule, although the powers conferred on them were usually those

that were granted to bodies politic and corporate. The support came from the rent or the sale of school lands; a share in the common school fund; gifts; endowments; the sale of shares of stock; and, tuition.

Much of the machinery that existed for the administrative organization and supervision of education was found in the church. Missionary preachers opened academies in the centers of population to educate the youth, as well as to prepare ministers of the gospel. McKendreean, Alton, and Illinois Colleges, respectively representing Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian-Congregational efforts, united their strength before the legislature granted them charters. Following the period of the legislature-church struggle, charters were freely given to academies, but many of them were modeled upon college charters which had shown the unmistakable influence of New England and the Yale movement in Illinois.

The State went little farther than to grant charters to groups of individuals for academic purposes, or to recognize permissively any unchartered institution that kept within the bounds of law. The results were that the standards for admission, tuition fees, the length of the school year, and the length of the school day were in no sense uniform throughout the State. However, the academy did retain the core of subjects of the Latin grammar school, around which other subjects were added to prepare students for useful and professional positions in life. Besides the ancient languages and arithmetic, modern languages, more mathematical subjects, some social sciences, natural and physical sciences, philosophy, religion, cultural and artistic subjects, and manual labor, were added. Formal examinations were conducted, at the close of each term, by a local committee of prominent men, usually ministers, to pass judgment on the efficiency of instruction. Occasionally, a farsighted, liberal minded academic principal indicated some of the social values of an education.

A utilitarian educational philosophy was introduced in the West by the manual labor movement which maintained: that only the useful in schools was valuable; that mental and physical work were practicable only when they were united; that conjoint mental and physical work were economical because time was saved in gaining knowledge and learning a

trade; that manual labor connected with the schools was far superior to harmful play; that new and better opportunities were opened up through which a living could be made; that manual labor connected with scholastic pursuits, above all, was democratic, and that the cost of theoretical and practical education was within the reach of a larger number. The editors, churches, missionary societies, and the early educational leaders were convinced of the value of the system that was advocated by Neef and Maclure. Consequently, manual labor schools were created, and that feature was incorporated in several of the literary institutions. Turner followed up the idea, enlarged it and made it more specific in his plan for and the advocacy of a system of education in which the common man would have equal advantages with the professional classes. Partly due to his efforts, the Morrill Land Grant Act was passed by congress, and the Illinois Industrial University was chartered. A decade later, the high schools began to introduce some features of the manual labor idea in the system of manual training.

The academy was a well established institution in Illinois by 1850. Before that date, scarcely any other means existed in the State by which a useful, cultural, or professional secondary education could be obtained. In spite of the pronouncements that the academy was a frontier institution in which all classes could mingle, it served only a limited number of the population who lived near its doors and were able to pay the price for instruction. Therefore, the next step in the discussion is the role that the common school played in the education of the children of the State.

At the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the apprenticeship system of education was dying out in the older states of the East and the South. However, the emigrants from the latter had carried that custom to Illinois, apprenticeship laws had been passed, and indenture agreements were made with some white youth and negroes, but the system was not as extensive as it had been in the colonial days because of the increasing opportunities for education, and the growing sentiments of the humanitarian philosophy in the rights of all individuals for freedom and equality.

To provide that liberty, and to insure the permanence of free institutions in Illinois, the education of the youth of the

State by means of a system of free common schools, was necessary. The law of 1825 provided that a school system should be established, that the schools should be free to all children, and that the schools thus created should be supported by two per cent of all the yearly state revenues, and by a local general property tax. Governor Coles was probably the author of the bill, rather than Senator Duncan, and drew his ideas for a complete system of education consisting of primary, secondary and university instruction from Jefferson's plan, with which he was familiar. The first concern was with primary instruction, which the law of 1825 made possible. Five free school districts were ordered established in Madison county by the county commissioners within a few months after the enactment of the law. No complaint was made in the Edwardsville paper or in the county court, although objection must have been marked in some of the other counties because the legislature annulled the local tax clause, in 1827, and the state two per cent section in 1829. From that time, to 1855, common schools in general, were supported by the parents of the children who attended the schools.

The efforts of the educational and political leaders of the State were redoubled, after the annulment of the law of 1825, in order to create a free common school system. An educational survey of Illinois, and the assembling of information about educational progress of the eastern states, were the bases on which a teacher association addressed the people of the State and sent a memorial to the legislature on the subject of common schools. The sections of the bill which provided for free schools and the establishment of an academy in each county for the training of teachers, were defeated. Some of the academies did supply a scholastic education for the common school teacher, but there was no state supported normal school until 1857. Little had been expected of the common teacher in qualifications, little of value was returned in the way of service, but the wages were equally as good as those paid by the older eastern and New England States.

Four agencies through which the common school was aided in its development and in its establishment as a free public institution, were notable. 1. Prominent educational leaders were: many of the governors; the Illinois College

group; such editors as Judge Hall, John S. Wright, and Charles E. Hovey; the missionary circuit riders, and resident ministers; state superintendents; legislators; state agents, and a few nationally prominent men in the persons of Jefferson, Clinton, Mann and Barnard. 2. Many of the newspapers of the State, *The Illinois Monthly Magazine*, *The Common School Advocate*, *The Prairie Farmer*, and *The Illinois Teacher*, were the literary means devoted to the cause of the common school. 3. Some of the institutions that increased the general intelligence of the people, and created a desire for better educational opportunities, were: *The Ladies' Aid Association* for the Education of Females; working-men's organizations; public libraries; Sunday schools; and academies. 4. Enthusiasm, harmony, and co-operation among the friends of the common school in the interest of enlightenment, were developed by educational convention.

The legislature partly followed the advice of the Peoria Teachers' Convention by creating a State Superintendent of Common Schools in the person of the Secretary of State, and allowing a tax to be levied for the support of common schools in any district where two-thirds of the legal voters so decided. The constitutional convention provided, in the first draft of the constitution, for the levying of a tax for the maintenance of free schools, and appointment of a separate Superintendent of Common Schools, but the final draft of the constitution of 1847, was singularly silent on the subject of education.

The demands became so urgent that the governor, in 1854,¹ appointed a state superintendent whom the legislature charged with the duty of providing a bill for the reorganization of the entire common school system. The bill was passed in 1855. A state tax of two mills was levied on every dollar of property and the income added to the common school fund; a local tax was levied by the trustees of both township and district to help maintain at least one free school in every district for six months in the year. The state common school fund was distributed in such a manner that two-thirds was given to the county on the basis of the number of white children between the ages of five and twenty-one years; the remaining one-third was distributed on the basis of the number

¹ See foot-note following reference 13, Chapter XI.

of townships, or parts of townships in each county. The money due the townships was to be distributed in proportion to the number of days of school that were actually taught.

The method of distribution of the state school fund, which benefited the poorer sections, as well as the richer districts, was a powerful argument in favor of free schools. Such institutions were democratic; they were the means by which children could be educated at home; they were located where they were needed, and they were inexpensive. Nevertheless, the successful academy had superior teachers; they were better equipped, and they had more extensive subjects of study. Thus two sharply defined groups existed in the State; the one favored the common school, the other favored the academy. At one extreme, the free school was placed in a class with free negroes; at the other, it was eulogized.

The common school was passing through the process of grading in the period under consideration so that it was being divided into primary, grammar, and higher departments. More of the first were needed, less of the second, and still fewer of the last, to serve the educational requirements of a community. To facilitate the process of grading, which provided better opportunities for the children, the practice of joining districts developed in which a higher department could serve the entire union territory. The legislature recognized the right of unionization in legalizing the action of certain directors, who had joined their districts, even before the free school law made a general provision for grading.

The high school, usually designated as a part of the common school system, thus had one root of its origin in the common school. Sometimes, the city council, as in Chicago, created a high school as a part of the common school system, but for a few years the highest part of the elementary schools, overlapped the lowest part of the high school. Neither had yet defined entirely its sphere of action. The other main root of the high school was in the academy. The latter institutions that were especially strong dominated the secondary field for several years, even after the free school law was passed because they were already in existence, because the conservatives hated to forsake them for the common schools, because many people objected to paying a tax for the education of

other children than their own, and because they were better equipped with superior teachers, apparatus, buildings, and a more suitable program of subjects. The weaker academies were glad of the chance to reorganize as free schools because the means of support was at hand. In the long run, however, the academies failed to hold their own with the free public high school which was under way before the Civil War.

A second proof that the common schools were providing some secondary education is found in the examination of the character of their subjects of study. What were usually designated as elementary subjects were taught in the common schools, but many instances existed where higher branches received equal and even more emphasis. The explanation is found in the fact that the academies supplied a great number of common school teachers who naturally taught the subjects that they had learned in the academy. Moreover, the common school took the academy as its pattern; what was considered the means of a cultural education in the latter, were equally appropriate for the common man's children. Hence the free public high school based much of its subject matter on the academic program, which was the current secondary practice, and which had a distinct philosophy underlying it.

By 1860 the common schools, as had been suggested in the process of gradation, considered that some subject matter was more difficult than other material. Before passing to a higher department, the next lower one must have been completed. Hence the high school required the passing of more or less formal examinations as a condition of entrance.

The law of 1825 which provided for free schools was repealed a few years later; a second effort was made in 1835, for free common schools. After several previous efforts, the first relatively permanent free school law was passed in 1855 by which taxation was mandatory. The common school system, with its upper part, the high school, was supported at public expense.

For a considerable period of time before the passage of the free school law, townships were incorporated for educational purposes under the control of elected trustees whose duty it was to district the township to suit the wishes and convenience of the people. The law of 1855, as amended in

1857, 1859 and 1865, provided for the union of districts which were to be under the control of a publicly elected board of trustees. Since high schools were very likely to have been created when districts united, the third distinguishing characteristic of the free public high school was that it was controlled by a public board.

However, several years elapsed before the high school in Illinois had defined its sphere of action, and before it had grown into the affections of the people. When the Supreme Court decisions, between 1875 and 1879, had settled the constitutionality of certain sections of the school law relative to the common school and the high school, the latter institution may be said to have been firmly established. The gap had been bridged between secondary and common school education. No longer was the academy the institution that provided the elementary and secondary education for the wealthier people; nor was the common school the institution of the poor man alone. Instead of the continuation of the beginning of a parallel system of class education, democracy in Illinois had made a vertical system in which a ladder extended for all from the primary grades to the university.

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